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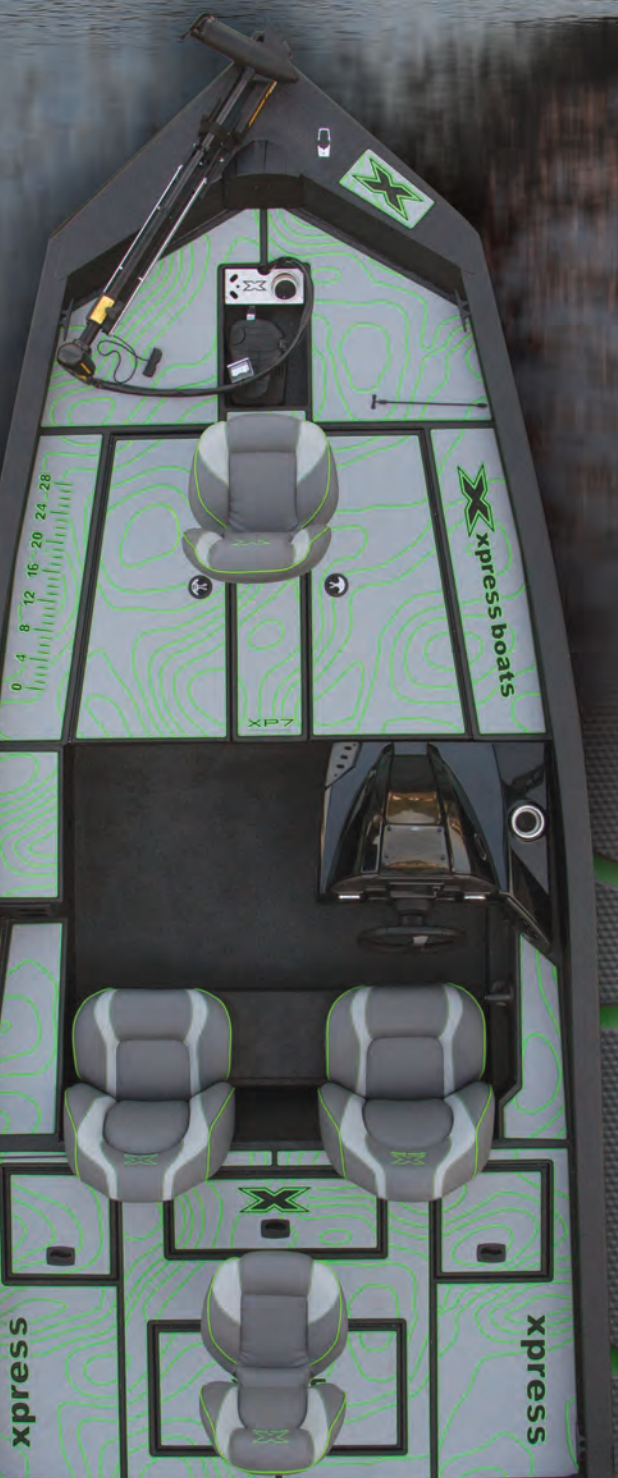

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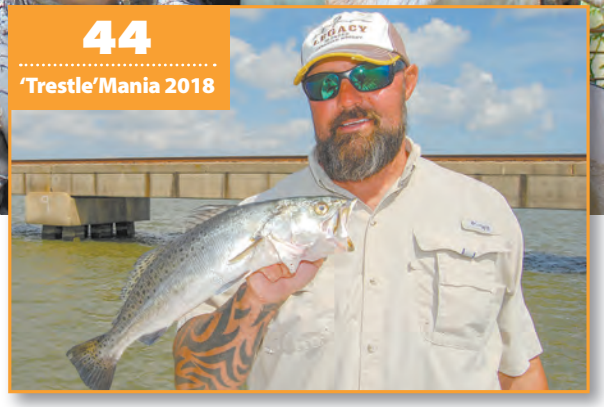

44
'Trestle'Mania 2018

# Louisiana CONTENTS

Volume 38 | Number 10 | October 2018

## FEATURES:


**29 Hunting the rut in 2018** cover story
While last year's breeding season kicked off a little early, the state's former deer study leader is predicting a more typical rut for Louisiana whitetails this year.
>>>By David Moreland

**44 'Trestle'Mania 2018**
The World Series speckled trout run on eastern Lake Pontchartrain's famed bridges is imminent, and just like in the Fall Classic, home runs and strike outs are both part of the game. Here's how one guide keeps his clients swinging for the fences on the 5.8-mile train bridge — and filling up his box.
>>>By Patrick Bonin

**53 In the 'Cross'Hairs**
Crossbows are still looked down upon by some traditional bowhunters, but they definitely give people another option during archery season. Here's what you need to know if you're heading into the woods with one this fall.
>>>By Chris Ginn

**58 Small game — big fun**
Squirrel season opens this month — here are some tactics to help you connect with bushy tails.
>>>By Keith LaCaze

**69 The Delacroix trifecta**
Specks, reds and bass are all doable on a nice fall day in Delacroix. Here's what you need to know to pull off the triple play.
>>>By Jerald Horst

**80 Keeping up with the Joneses**
Putting big bucks on the wall is a tradition with this North Louisiana family. Here are the steps they take to consistently make it happen.
>>>By Kinny Haddox

**88 Toledo Bend's fall feeding frenzy**
Angling pros share some do's and don'ts to maximize your time on the water and catch more fish.
>>>By David A. Brown

**93 Fat Boys mean fat specks**
This Lone Star State lure isn't as popular with Louisiana anglers as it is along the Texas coast, but that certainly doesn't mean you can't use it here this fall to catch some hammer trout.
>>>By Chris Bush

**98 Doormats in decline?**
Except for Big Lake, the state's flounder fishery — according to anglers, anyway — isn't what it once was. But there's still hope for a solid recovery.
>>>By Chris Ginn

**107 Pitch black cats**
Nighttime is the right time for catfish — and this jugline specialist shares his tips from False River.
>>>By Jerald Horst


## FISHING HOTSPOTS


180 Lafitte
181 Lake Bistineau
181 Golden Meadow
182 Henderson
184 Lake Claiborne
186 Lake Catherine
188 Shell Beach/Delacroix
190 Calcasieu River
192 Toledo Bend
194 Venice

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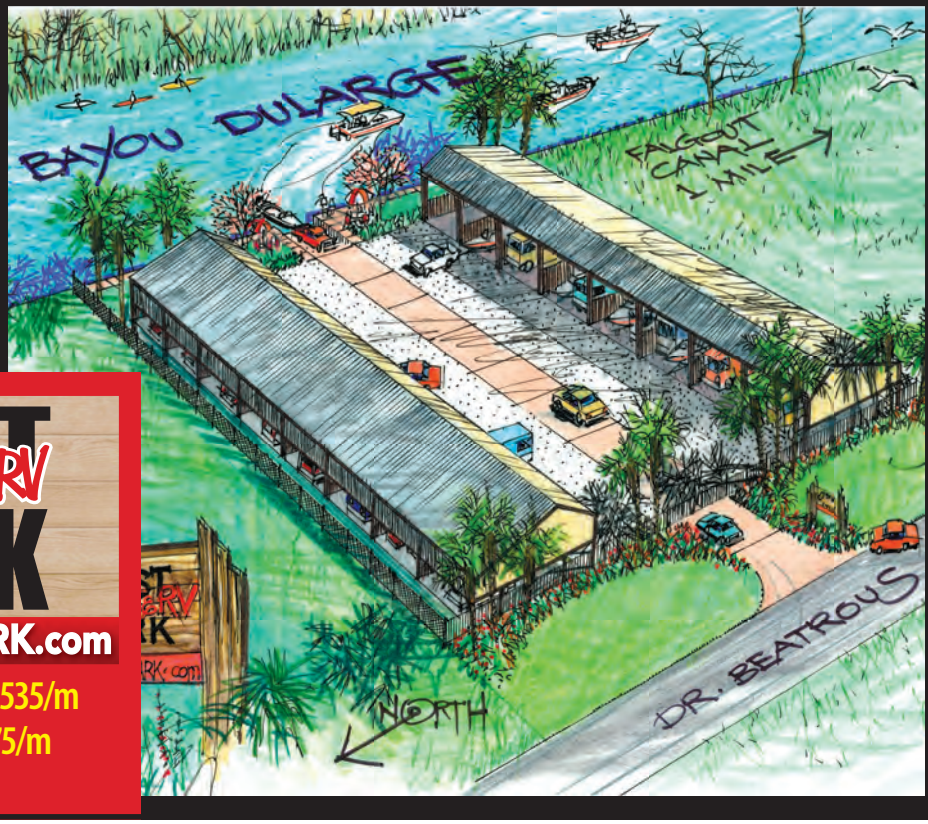


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**98** Doormats in decline?

**93** Fat Boys mean fat specks


## OUTDOOR UPDATE:


**16** Dragon-like catch shocks Louisiana fishing guide

**18** LDWF asks hunters not to transport roseau cane


## PLUS


**152** Top 3 tree stand safety tips


**ON THE COVER:**

Bowhunters return to the deer woods this month, with breeding already taking place in some parts of the state. Check out Dave Moreland's 2018-19 Rut Report starting on page 29 for specific date ranges where you hunt. (Cover photo by Rick Small.)

## COLUMNS:


**116** Creature Feature By Jerald Horst

**118** Ask Capt. Paul By Captain Paul Titus

**120** Fly Lines By Catch Cormier

**124** Grunts & Gobbles By David Moreland

**128** Lure Review By Don Shoopman

**132** Game Warden By Keith LaCaze

**134** Sticks and Strings By Sammy Romano

**136** Happy Trails By Bill Garbo

**138** Paddles 'N Puddles By Chris Holmes

**146** Seafood Bible By Jerald & Glenda Horst


## DEPARTMENTS:


**152** Field Notes

**164** New Products

**166** Hunting/Fishing Scrapbook

**169** Hunting Regulations

**170** Sunrise/Sunset Chart

**172** Sportsman Astro Tables

**176** Sportsman Tide Guide

**180** Fishing Hotspots

**197** Louisiana Guides

**197** Sportsman Classifieds

**201** Advertiser Index



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**Volume 38 | No 10**

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# DRAGON-LIKE CATCH SHOCKS LOUISIANA GUIDE

By Ann Taylor

Josh and Jamie Gaspard pose with the wicked-looking lancetfish they caught 120 miles out of Fourchon.

Photo courtesy of Capt. Jamie Gaspard

## A LANCETFISH LOOKS LIKE SOMETHING STRAIGHT OUT OF A HORROR MOVIE

It's been a very strange year for Capt. Jamie Gaspard of Pure Adrenalin Fishing Charters out of Grand Isle and Fourchon.

Normally-dependable tuna have been somewhat hard to find, but giant grouper and a host of other fish have more than made up for them.

None of that, however, prepared Gaspard for the odd-looking creature that hit his deck in mid-August.

It actually looked like something more at home in Jurassic Park.

"The only thing it was missing was a hissing noise," said Gaspard, who was fishing 2,000 feet down in about 5,000 feet of water 120 miles out of Fourchon in the Green Canyon.

The strange-looking creature actually was a lancetfish, or Alepisaurus, which means scaleless lizard. This vicious-looking predator has a long slinky body, huge eyes, teeth larger than a barracuda, holographic coloring and a large, sailfish-like iridescent fin.

Lancetfish can grow to about 6 feet, and are sometimes caught by commercial tuna long-liners. They are found in all deepwater oceans except the polar regions.

"The eyes were glowing," Gaspard said. "We put it on ice, and the damn thing was moving around five hours later."

The captain, who has fished the area for 23 years, had never seen one before — and is currently trying to find someone to mount it for him. ▪

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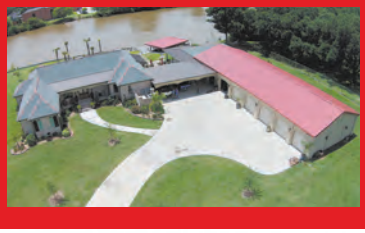

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Louisiana hunters and fishermen are being asked to not transplant or transport roseau cane from a quarantine area south of Highway 10, in an effort to prevent the spread of an insect that is destroying large swaths of the plant in the Mississippi River Delta.

Courtesy LDWF

# LDWF ASKS DUCK HUNTERS NOT TO TRANSPORT ROSEAU CANE

From News Reports

## QUARANTINE ISSUED TO COMBAT INVASIVE INSECT

The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry has issued a quarantine for about the southern one-third of the state which prohibits transporting and transplanting roseau cane, to prevent the spread of roseau cane scale.

The quarantine area encompasses all areas south of Louisiana Highway 10, and begins at the Mississippi/Louisiana state line and moves west until intersecting with U.S. Highway 171 in Vernon Parish, then moves south and continues to U.S. Highway 190 in DeRidder until reaching the Sabine River and the Texas/Louisiana state line.

With duck season cranking up next month, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is advising both waterfowl hunters and fishermen to be aware of the quarantine area and the threat posed by the scale.

According to a LDWF press release, hunters and fishermen are asked not to transport the cane, or tie their boats to it. And cane debris should be removed from boats — and boats should be washed with soapy water and drained — prior to leaving marinas in the quarantine area.

The scale, native from China or Japan, has been identified as Nipponaclerda biwakoensis, commonly referred to as Phragmites Scale or Roseau Cane Mealy Bug. It has had severe effects on the dominant vegetation of the Mississippi River Delta, and the rate at which it is expanding is alarming, according to LDWF, LDAF and LSU AgCenter biologists.

Roseau cane is a tall wetland grass that helps protect the Mississippi River's birdfoot delta and Louisiana's coastal region. Unlike some marsh vegetation, roseau cane stands up well to tropical storm events and is one of the most erosion-resistant marsh plants along the Louisiana coast.

The spread of the scale could have severe impacts on the health of the state's coastal marshes as well as valuable agricultural crops throughout the state, according to the release. For more information on roseau cane, go to www.wlf.louisiana.gov/fishing/roseau-cane-scale-delta. ▪

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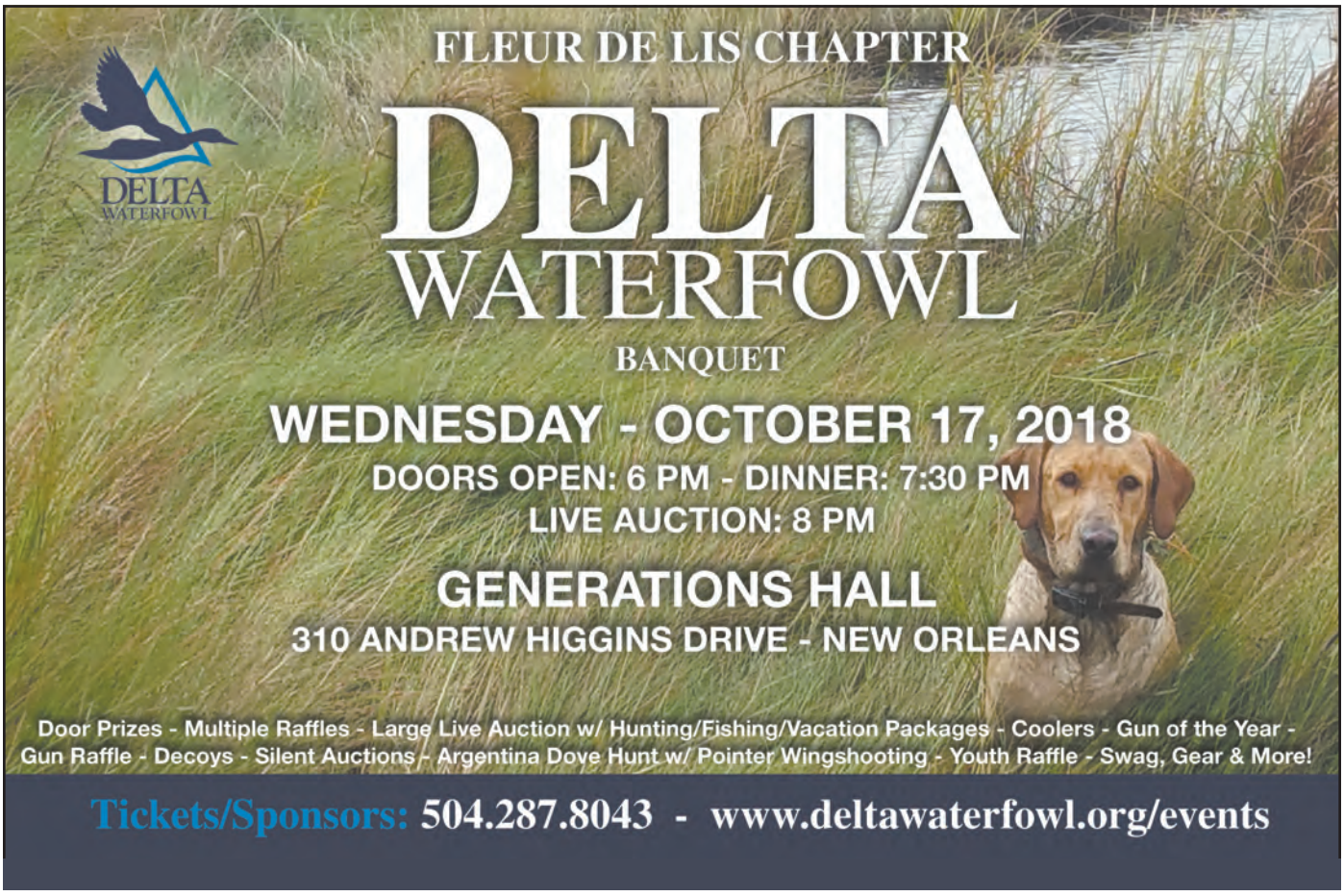


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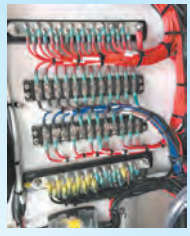

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Gary and Stacey Kinler show off the STAR-tagged redfish Gary reeled in north of Grand Isle on June 3. In addition to the $10,000 Louisiana Sportsman subscriber bonus, Kinler also will receive a 21-foot NauticStar boat with a 150 hp Mercury motor for his catch.

Ann Taylor

# 'YEAR OF REDEMPTION' FOR CCA LOUISIANA'S STAR TOURNAMENT

By Patrick Bonin

## ONE TRUCK, TWO BOATS — AND A $10,000 LOUISIANA SPORTSMAN SUBSCRIBER BONUS GIVEN AWAY

The Coastal Conservation Association's Louisiana STAR Tournament got off to a quick start this summer, with Bryan Dorsey setting the pace less than 48 hours in.

The Youngsville angler ditched plans to head offshore out of Grand Isle over the Memorial Day weekend because of Subtropical Storm Alberto, and opted for a quick trip to Dry Reef in Vermilion Bay on May 27 instead.

Just 90 minutes after registering for the tournament online, he reeled in the first CCA STAR-tagged redfish of the year and will take home a 2018 Chevy Silverado from the Super Chevy Dealers of Baton Rouge, Acadiana and New Orleans for his efforts.

Gary Kinler, of Luling, kept the momentum going when he reeled in a STAR-tagged redfish in Raccoon Bay, north of Grand Isle, on June 3.

Kinler's red was extra-special — and not just because he won a 21-foot NauticStar and Mercury outboard motor package.

He also took home the $10,000 Louisiana Sportsman bonus prize paid to the first STAR-registered angler who caught a tagged redfish and also subscribed to the magazine.

What made it even more sweet was that Kinler's wife, Stacey, caught a STAR-tagged red near Elmer's Island in 2014 that would have won that year's Chevy pickup truck — but she hadn't registered for the tournament.

"We're going to name the boat 'Redemption,'" Gary said with a chuckle. "Either that, or 'Too Lucky to be True.'"

Ty Trosclair came through with the last tagged redfish of the tournament and will receive another 21-foot NauticStar and Mercury outboard motor package after the 17-year-old from Grand Chenier reeled in a winner from the bank on the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge.

He, too, made the most of a second chance: In 2017, he caught another STAR-tagged red, but also wasn't registered for the tournament.

"I wasn't going to make that mistake again," Trosclair said.

Tournament director Rad Trascher said 2018 was another banner year for the STAR. The awards banquet is slated for Oct. 18 at Live Oak Arabians in Baton Rouge.

"It was a great year. We finished with over 12,000 anglers fishing. The interesting thing was it was a year of redemption,

with the Kinler's and Ty both winning," Trascher said. "But it was also a story where the leader board didn't really get locked up — there weren't just a ton of divisions with monsters on the board early, which is odd.

"So it made for a great competitive year where we had hundreds of leader board changes — it let everybody have a shot." ▪

## 2018 STAR WINNERS *

- Speckled Trout (East) — Ed Sexton, 6.82 pounds
- Speckled Trout (Southeast) — Taylor Veazey, 6.68 pounds
- Speckled Trout (Southwest) — Dave G. Broussard, 6.15 pounds
- Speckled Trout (West) — Billy Boswell, 7.5 pounds
- Flounder — Joey Harris, 6.5 pounds
- Mangrove Snapper — Aaron Breaux, 11.74 pounds
- Cobia — Travis Callais, 56.7 pounds
- Dorado — Ross Sampey, 42.98 pounds
- Red Snapper — Robert Garrison, 29 pounds
- Fly (East) — Rudy Hall, 3.26 pounds
- Fly (West) — Bruce White, 4.14 pounds
- Ladies' Speckled Trout (West) — Leah Logan, 4.08 pounds
- Ladies Speckled Trout (East) — JoAnn Vidrine, 5.24 pounds
- Kayak (East) — Jared Heider, 3.96 pounds
- Kayak (Southeast) — Jonathan Vannoy, 5.63 pounds
- Kayak (Southwest) — Matthew J. Broussard, 3.21 pounds
- Kayak (West) — Eric Chavers, 4.54 pounds
- Sheepshead (East) — Angie Stewart, 8.31 pounds
- Sheepshead (West) — Tom Gurley, 7.59 pounds
- Calcasieu Calcutta — Michael Fesco, 4.46 pounds
- Bank Fishing — Donald R. Davis, 6.88 pounds

* Unofficial standings pending final polygraph results.

Bryan Dorsey, of Youngsville, poses with the CCA STAR-tagged redfish he caught at Dry Reef in Vermilion Bay.

Ty Trosclair, 17, of Grand Chenier, reeled in a STAR-tagged redfish on Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge on June 24.


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A proposed rule change would close the season for female blue crabs from Sept. 9 to Oct. 13 in 2019.

# LWFC: CHANGES LIKELY IN BLUE CRAB HARVEST REGS FOR 2019

## FEMALE BLUE CRAB HARVEST CLOSING WOULD MOVE FROM SPRING TO FALL NEXT YEAR

From News Reports

At its September meeting in Baton Rouge, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission adopted a notice of intent to change regulations for the commercial and recreational harvest of blue crabs in 2019.

The proposed rule would change the closed season for mature female blue crab harvest to Sept. 9 through Oct. 13, 2019. Currently, the harvest of female blue crabs is set to be closed from mid-March to mid-April next spring.

The proposal will also include banning the recreational harvest of female blue crab during that season. These changes are expected to result in less negative impact on the crab fishery while maintaining the same level of protection to the blue crab stock, according to a release from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Details on the changes include:

• The recreational and commercial take of female blue crab from any of the waters of the state or the possession of female blue crabs while on waters of the state would be prohibited for a 35-day period beginning the second Monday of September in 2019 (September 9 – October 13, 2019). All female blue crab in possession of any persons on the water will be deemed to have been taken from the waters of the state.

• These regulations will replace the previous 30-day closure imposed in 2017 and the 60-day female harvest restriction imposed in the spring of 2018, and the previously proposed restriction in spring of 2019.

Interested persons may submit written comments relative to the proposed rule to Peyton Cagle, Marine Fisheries Biologist DCL-B, Marine Fisheries Section, 1213 N. Lakeshore Dr., Lake Charles, La. 70601, or via e-mail to peyton.cagle@la.gov prior to November 28, 2018. ■

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By Chris Holmes

# TANDEM KAYAKERS TEAM UP TO WIN RIDE THE BULL 9

## BROTHERS-IN-LAW CONNECT WITH SCHOOL OF REDS EARLY, HOLD ON FOR VICTORY

More than 620 kayak anglers churned into Caminada Pass last month for the ninth go-round of Ride the Bull — the world's largest kayak fishing tournament.

The event is as unique as South Louisiana: It's a live-catch, bull redfish-only event. When anglers land a bull, an assist boat moves in to take the fish to the dock for weighing, tagging and releasing. The boats and weigh staff had their hands full, with 99 bulls weighed-in, many tipping the scales in the high 20s. It took a bull heavier than 26.5 pounds just to make it into the final Top 10.

Coming out on top for RTB 9 was a team of brothers-in-law, Ricky Smith and Dustin Adams, who were fishing together in a tandem kayak. (The rules allow for two participants to be in the same kayak as long as both anglers are registered for the tournament.)

"We saw our friend Shawn (Rogers) hook-up near us and then saw bait scatter as a school of bulls came by. I hooked up and as Dustin was trying to reel in to get out of my way, he got bit, too," Smith said.

The duo successfully landed both fish and sent them off with the assist boat, not knowing for sure which one was bigger. When the results were posted on the tournament's Facebook page, Smith's bull was in first place at 33.3 pounds, and Adams was second at 31.71 pounds. They continued to fish, but didn't get another bite.

However, their bulls held on and maintained their places on the leaderboard when fishing ended.

Smith, already holding a $3,000 first place check, chose the Wilderness ATAK 120 equipped with the Helix motor drive system valued at $3,700. Adams also added to his $2,000 check by selecting the Wilderness Radar 135 with the Helix pedal drive system,valued at $2,800.

"We continue to put up astronomical numbers. There is no other non-qualifying, single day, shotgun start kayak fishing tournament that even comes close," said Rad Trascher, tournament director. "Ride the Bull is the world's largest kayak fishing tournament." ▪

## 2018 RTB TOP 10

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Place | Ricky Smith | 33.30 |
| 2nd Place | Dustin Adams | 31.74 |
| 3rd Place | Grant Gautreaux | 29.90 |
| 4th Place | Shawn Rogers | 29.44 |
| 5th Place | Brad Valtierra | 28.70 |
| 6th Place | Ben Schuler | 28.46 |
| 7th Place | Mark Smith | 27.90 |
| 8th Place | Bentley Hill | 27.78 |
| 9th Place | Basile Speziale | 27.68 |
| 10th Place | David Williamson | 26.82 |

Ricky Smith, left, and Dustin Adams show off their winning checks from Ride the Bull 9 on Grand Isle. In addition to cash, both anglers won brand new Wilderness Systems kayaks.

Chris Holmes

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# DOE RESCUE VIDEO GOES VIRAL

By Patrick Bonin

## ALMOST 3,000,000 FACEBOOK VIEWERS WATCH ANGLERS NEAR GROSSE TETE SAVE DEER

When Clint Cryar and Colby Fruge headed out for a fishing trip in early September, dodging the rain and catching a few catfish were all they really had in mind.

The fishing part of the day turned out to be pretty forgettable in rainy, nasty weather, but what happened on their way in has made the friends from Clinton Facebook famous — with videos of their adventure garnering almost 3,000,000 views last month.

So what could have possibly happened on the Choctaw Canal just north of Interstate 10 near Grosse Tete to attract all that internet attention?

The pair spotted a doe with its hind legs hung up in the fork of a tree along the banks, and videoed the rescue mission, thinking their friends and family would enjoy seeing it.

"We didn't expect it to take off at all …," Cryar said about the videos, with a chuckle. "Then it just took off and people I didn't know started liking it and commenting and sharing it. I mean, it went crazy.

"It was a lot more support than what we were expecting. It was a once-in-a-lifetime good experience."

The adventure started around 3:30 when the pair noticed the doe pinned in the tree, struggling to keep its head above water with its front legs stuck in the mud. They hadn't seen the deer on their way out, so they suspect it hadn't been stuck for more than 90 minutes.

"You could tell she had been struggling. There was hair all over the tree where she had been trying to jump around," said Fruge, who is seen assisting the animal in the video shot by Cryar. "Her belly was raw from where she had been trying to get out. She was trying to work her back end around, but she was getting weaker all the time."

They were in Cryar's 16X50 Gator Trax, so he eased the boat to the bank so Fruge could get in position to try to free the animal — which he did.

### OUT OF THE TREE — BUT STILL STUCK

"As soon as I got her leg out, she sprinted off to the side and tried to jump up on the bank, and she fell and just kept falling," he said.

The bank was steep and wet, and the animal tried four times to make it up, but didn't, eventually laying down in the water.

"I guess she was trying to gain her strength back, but it was like she just gave up," Fruge said. "When I got out of the boat into the water, I sank up to my shins in the mud. So with those skinny legs, she just kept going straight down."

"We saw a couple gators in there, and she was on the side of the bank just worn out and couldn't get up," Cryar said. "She'd have been an easy target."

So he stopped the video and repositioned the boat, then filmed again as Fruge helped the big doe — this time getting into the water to do so.

### DOE IN THE BOAT

So Fruge, who weighs about 135 pounds himself, helped the 100-pound-plus doe into Cryar's boat, thinking the deer would scramble off the bow and head into the woods.

"I was hoping she didn't run to the back of the boat, thinking it might have been a bad idea," Fruge said. "But she just laid there panting. I was petting her and she didn't move. But she started to regain her breath a little bit."

Either too tired or too scared to take the hint and bolt for freedom, Fruge wound up assisting the doe on land, struggling to pick up the animal's dead weight as the boat edged away from the bank.

"I picked her up. I'm a little fellow, so it took all of me to get her there," he said. "It was a struggle, but I finally got her up there on dry land."

Once he faced the doe toward the woods, it took off — like a rocket.

"Her back leg peeled out and kind of smoked me in the chest, kind of knocked the breath out of me for a little bit, and put a red mark on my chest," Fruge said with a grin. "Then she just shot off into the woods. It was a relief." ▪

## A BOWFISHING RECORD

**Ezra Patureau, left, was 13 when he drilled this redfish, which measured 43 ¼ inches long and weighed 29 pounds, 6 ounces, on a June bowfishing trip in Pointe-Aux-Chenes with his buddy, Braden Gaudet . The Bowfishing Association of America certified the bull as both the Louisiana and world record in the youth category.**

# WORLD WILD WEB
## THAT'S A LOT OF TURTLE SOUP ....

This has to be the largest snapping turtle we've ever laid eyes on. It's an old picture we dug up from the "River Monsters" Facebook page. We asked our Sportsman Facebook followers if they had any big snappers to show us, and these are just a few of the pictures we received.

Courtesy Colt Vaughn

Courtesy Jim Comeaux

Courtesy Tyler Legendre

Courtesy Kim Serigné Jr.

Courtesy Jonathan Procell

Courtesy Katlyn Caswell

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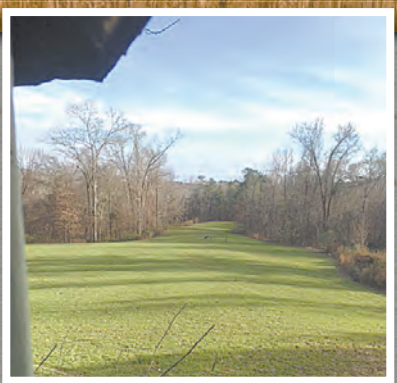
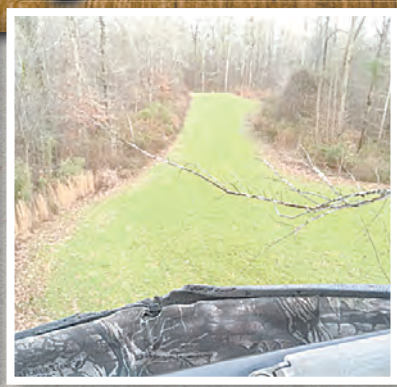

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Teddy Dupuy busted this big 158-inch 8-point during the rut on Thanksgiving Day last year in the Kisatchie National Forest.

SPORTSMAN

THE 2018 RUT

# HUNTING THE RUT IN 2018

While last year's breeding season kicked off a little early, the state's former deer study leader is predicting a more typical rut for Louisiana whitetails this year.

By David Moreland

Photo courtesy of Teddy Dupuy

The rut is always the best opportunity for a hunter to connect with a real trophy buck during deer season.

But the whitetail rut in Louisiana can be a blessing or a curse for our state's hunters. It begins in September in the southwest parishes of the state, and runs all the way through the end of archery season in late-winter in the Atchafalaya Basin.

Hunters in early-rut areas have the advantage of getting to hunt the rut from start to finish, while hunters in late-rut areas generally miss out on the second round of breeding activity.

But hunters in the early-rut areas have to deal with warm weather hunting, while hunters in the late areas might experience extreme cold temperatures, like last season.

So while early-rut hunters finish their season relatively quickly and can pursue other hunting activities, late-rut hunters have to hang on in hopes of connecting with that wall hanger — possibly missing out on some duck and small game opportunities in the process.

But deer hunters who hunt on public lands have the best of both worlds, since they can follow the rut across the state from wildlife management area to wildlife management area.

## WHAT HAPPENED IN 2017

Last season the Sportsman's prediction for the rut was for it to peak around the middle of the month for the respective areas; Oct. 15 in Southwest Louisiana, Nov. 15 in Area 2, Dec. 15 in Area 4 and Jan. 15 in the late-rut Mississippi Delta.

When deer season opened in the state, warm weather prevailed, but beginning in mid-December we were bombarded with three major cold fronts, two of which dumped snow in the Bayou State.

Deer hunters did well in Area 2. The buck harvest for an Area 2 club in Bossier Parish was as follows:

Oct. 15-31 — Nov. 1-15 — Nov. 16-30 — Dec. 1- Jan. 21

10 bucks 10 bucks 7 bucks 2 bucks

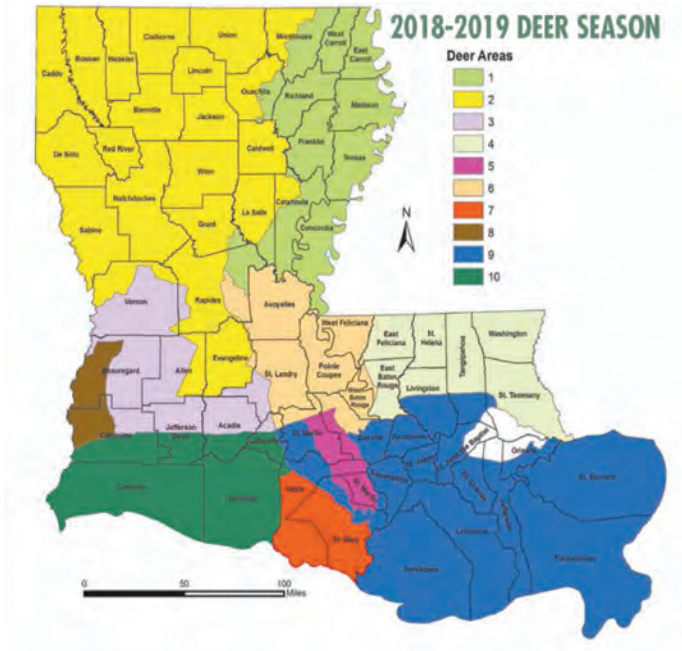
The rut on this club is the typical rut for Area 2, with activity beginning in late October, peaking in November and then ending by late December. It's a long deer season in Area 2, and for the most part once the rut is over, the chances of connecting with a buck in December or January are poor.

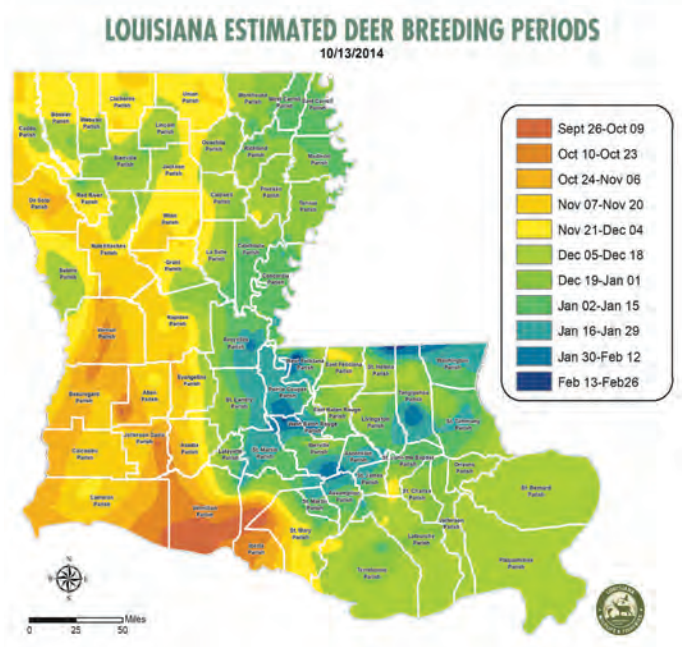
There are however, lands within Area 2 that were stocked with deer with late-rut genetics, so the late season days benefit these hunters.

The predicted early rut was pretty much on target. My friend Ken and I harvested two does in mid-December in Bossier Parish that had been bred: Using the fetal measurement scale, I calculated breeding dates of Nov. 13 and Nov. 24 for these two does.

In Area 4, snow hit the state during the first full week of December. I killed an adult doe on our property during that week, and checked her ovaries but found no signs of ovulation. The snow fell on Dec. 8 and I saw small bucks moving around and feeding, but no sign of breeding activity.

After the snow melted, the deer seemed to disappear, but toward the end of December the rut appeared to crank up a little later than predicted. Then another heavy freeze hit the first week of January, and it seemed to shut down deer movement.




This was followed by yet another snow event the week of Jan. 16. My son Ruffin and I hunted in Area 6 on Dec. 20 and we saw two nice 8-points that were looking for does based upon their actions. There were two adult does killed on this hunt, and examination of the ovaries showed that ovulation was taking place, which meant the rut was on.

I killed my third Area 4 deer on Jan. 25, a 1 ½-year-old doe that was ovulating — so the rut was still on there in late January.

No doubt our Louisiana deer are not used to severe winter weather, but they're equipped to handle it.

Our piney woods habitat in the state is certainly not designed

# THE 2018-19 **RUT PREDICTION**

| Area(s) | Pre-Rut | 1st Scraping Period | 1st Breeding Period | 2nd Scraping Period | 2nd Breeding Period |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3, 7, 8 & 10 | Aug 9 - Sept 8 | Sept 9 - 23 | Sept 24 - Oct 7 | Oct 8 - 23 | Oct 24 - Nov 6 |
| 2 | Sept. 8 - Oct 7 | Oct 8 - 23 | Oct 24 - Nov 6 | Nov 7 - 22 | Nov 23 - Dec 6 |
| 4 & 9 | Oct 7 - Nov 6 | Nov 7 - 22 | Nov 23 - Dec 6 | Dec 7 - 21 | Dec 22 - Jan 4 |
| 1, 5 & 6 | Nov 7 - Dec 6 | Dec 7 - 21 | Dec 22 - Jan 4 | Jan 5 - 19 | Jan 20 - Feb 3 |

to handle heavy snow events, and there was a good bit of limb damage which resulted in numerous power outages. I suspect deer movement was poor with all the cracking and breaking of limbs in the woods, and they simply laid low during this time.

It appeared to be a relatively low harvest of trophy-class bucks last season, based on the number of quality bucks at the Louisiana Sportsman Show in Gonzales in March. The extremely cold winter days in January may have contributed to the lack of hunter success during late-rut.

## THE RUT IN 2018

My prediction for the 2018 rut is that it will take place several weeks earlier than last year. When the primitive deer season opens in late October, actual breeding activity should be cranking up, with bucks chasing does. It would certainly be important for Area 2 hunters to be in their stands during the first two weeks of regular gun season.

Area 4 hunters should see some chasing toward the end of November, while hunters in Areas 1 and 6 should see activity in late December and early January. This should be a year that late-rut hunters will get to hunt the second round of breeding activity in late January.

**SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA** >>>

Photo courtesy of Donald Alexander

Donald Alexander of Logansport busted this 199-inch 19-point non-typical nicknamed 'Crab Claws' in DeSoto Parish just before the rut kicked in on Nov. 19, 2017.

# SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA: AREAS 3, 7, 8, 10

The pre-rut activities began in August, even though temperatures were hot. Bucks were making scrapes during this period, but didn't check them like they will during the first peak of scraping. Bucks will still be in their bachelor groups, and will be feeding heavily during this time. This area of the state is not known for producing the wall hangers that are found in the Mississippi Delta parishes. The limit of deer in Area 10 is three (see regulation book).

**NORTHWEST AND WEST CENTRAL LOUISIANA** >>>

The first breeding period for bucks in Southwest Louisiana will likely end on or about Oct. 7.

## AUGUST 2018

**Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10**

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 Pre-Rut Starts | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

## SEPTEMBER 2018

**Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10**

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 Pre-Rut Ends |
| 9 First Scraping Period Starts | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 First Scraping Period Ends | 24 First Breeding Period Starts | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | | | | | | |

## OCTOBER 2018

**Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10**

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 First Breeding Period Ends | 8 Second Scraping Period Starts | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 Second Scraping Period Ends | 24 Second Breeding Period Starts | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

## NOVEMBER 2018

**Areas 3, 7, 8 & 10**

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 Second Breeding Period Ends | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |

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# NORTHWEST AND WEST CENTRAL LOUISIANA: AREA 2

This is the largest area in the state containing parishes having a high deer harvest, such as Union and Claiborne. Bowhunters will see activity when that season opens on Oct. 1. And the primitive and gun hunters better be in their stands when those seasons open up. This is not the area to wait for the winter months to start deer hunting. With peak breeding occurring in November, the does will be pregnant in late December and January, and there will be visible fetuses in their uterus. Breeding dates can be calculated at this time using the fetal aging chart, and hunters can see when the breeding happened.

**SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA** >>>

The peak scraping period occurs just prior to actual breeding; this is the time to hunt a scrape and perhaps connect with a buck.

## SEPTEMBER 2018 — Area 2

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 Pre-Rut Starts |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | | | | | | |

## OCTOBER 2018 — Area 2

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 Pre-Rut Ends | 8 First Scraping Period Starts | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 First Scraping Period Ends | 24 First Breeding Period Starts | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

## NOVEMBER 2018 — Area 2

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 First Breeding Period Ends | 7 Second Scraping Period Starts | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 Second Scraping Period Ends | 23 Second Breeding Period Starts | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |

## DECEMBER 2018 — Area 2

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 Second Breeding Period Ends | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

# DETERMINING BREEDING DATES OF DOES

This photo shows three adult does and two fawns, which equates to poor productivity in this herd. Adult does on good habitat should be producing twins.

Dave Moreland

Breeding dates are determined from the measurement of embryos and fetuses using a fetal aging chart.

Dave Moreland

I spent a major part of my career studying breeding activity. Research in whitetail deer biology discovered a relationship between the length of an unborn deer fetus with the age of the fetus (number of days old). By measuring the length of the fetus and then determining the number of days old the fetus is, that number can be used to back up from the kill date and determine the date the doe was bred.

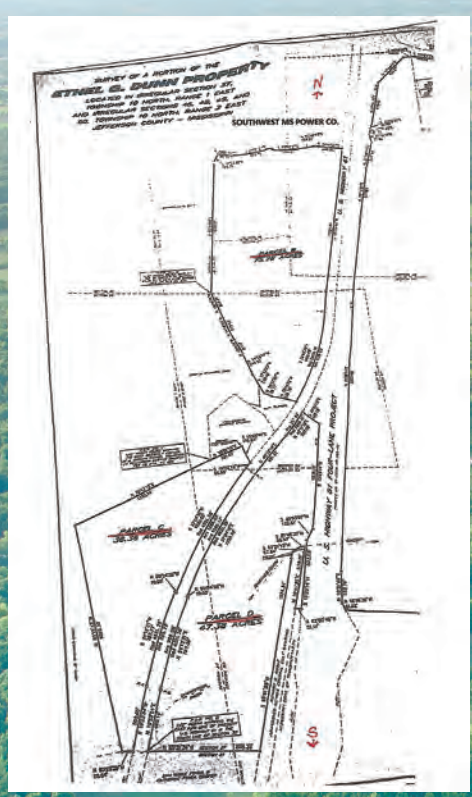
This research along with a fetal aging scale has made it easy for a landowner or club to gather beneficial information regarding the rut on the land they hunt.

Generally it is best to examine does that have been pregnant for at least two months. At the age of 30 days, the fetus or embryo is a small shrimp-like body that is only 7 to 9 mm long. The fetus scale is not designed to measure an embryo or fetus this small. At 60 days old, a fetus is about 75 mm and can be easily measured on the scale. Generally in the month of January in Area 2, a fetus is large enough to measure on the scale and, breeding dates can be established for does, which is just what I did on my friend's place in Bossier Parish.

However, in late-rut areas does harvested in late January are probably pregnant, but the embryos are too small to obtain a proper measurement. This just shows how late the rut is in Areas 1 and 6, and why the late season is important to the hunters in that part of the state. The fetal aging scale can be obtained from Forestry Supply in Jackson, Mississippi or from Construction Safety Products in Shreveport. ▪


PROPERTY FOR SALE

160 acres in Jefferson CO. MS. Frontage on west side of HWY 61 in Lorman MS and joins Southwest MS Power on North side. Frontage also on both sides of old HWY 61 headed south to Shankstown Creek. Mostly hardwood timber with scattered pine. Electricity available. $4000.00 per acre.




Contact Donnie Williams
337-277-3369
dwilliams189@cox.net

# SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA: AREAS 4 & 9

Area 4 also has a three-deer limit like Area 10. This regulation was designed to increase deer numbers in these locations. Lands that have not experienced a decline in deer numbers should consider enrollment in the DMAP program. Hunters in these areas will be able to hunt both periods of breeding activity this year. Bowhunters should see scraping in October, but these will not yet be checked on a regular basis. One month later, in November, the peak scraping period will take place and that will be the time to hunt the scrapes. During the second period of scraping, young nubby bucks are becoming sexually mature and will be working the scrapes. This second period of breeding activity is often a good time to connect with a nice late-season buck.

Trail camera surveys in Southeastern Louisiana point to low productivity from many deer herds there. Reasons for this include low quality habitat and predators.

**MISSISSIPPI DELTA, UPPER- AND LOWER-BASIN** >>>

## OCTOBER 2018 — Areas 4 & 9

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 Pre-Rut Starts | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

## NOVEMBER 2018 — Areas 4 & 9

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 Pre-Rut Ends | 7 First Scraping Period Starts | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 First Scraping Period Ends | 23 First Breeding Period Starts | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |

## DECEMBER 2018 — Areas 4 & 9

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 First Breeding Period Ends | 7 Second Scraping Period Starts | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 Second Scraping Period Ends | 22 Second Breeding Period Starts |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

## JANUARY 2019 — Areas 4 & 9

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 Second Breeding Period Ends | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

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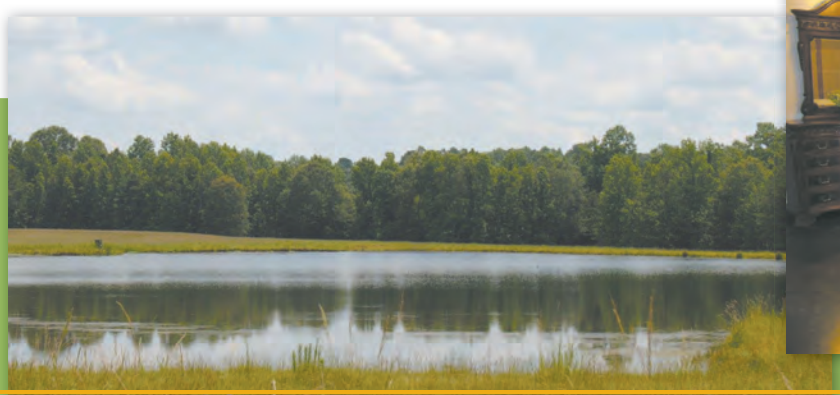
**Utilites:** Electric and Butane, rural water supplier, working well, and treatment system on site
**Lakes:** 2 Fully stocked lakes and 2 smaller ponds
**Homesites:** Fully Furnished Lodge, 2 Private cabins, a detached bunkhouse, and a poolhouse
**Other structures:** Large Skinning shed
**Wildlife:** Approximately 100 animals on site: Red Stags, Axis, Fallow, & Blackbucks
**Price:** 1.9 Million

Surrounded by a high fence and beautiful accent gate, this 457 acre parcel is located just 30 minutes south of Jackson in Simpson County. The majority of the property is hardwood timber with scattered pastures, wildlife openings, 2 fully stocked lakes, and 2 smaller ponds. After a long day in the field or by the lake, sit back and unwind in the fully furnished Main Lodge or one of the two private cabins. With a total of 8 bedrooms, 5 full baths, and 2 half baths; there is enough room for 22 guests! After a dip in the heated swimming pool in the poolhouse, relax around the firepit on the deck of the main lodge or catch a movie in the media room at the Lodge.



**Please Contact: Joni McClain, Owner/Broker • Blue Diamond Realty • 601-672-7999 • Joni@mcclain.ms**

Ruffin Moreland with a nice doe killed in late January in Area 6. Examination of the uterus from the doe showed that it was ovulating, which is probably why racked bucks were moving around on the property that morning.

Dave Moreland

# MISSISSIPPI DELTA, UPPER- AND LOWER-BASIN: AREAS 1, 5 & 6

The Mississippi Delta parishes and the upper-Basin parishes are the big buck locales of Louisiana. Avoyelles Parish is the king these days, although the old big buck parishes of Tensas, Madison and Concordia still grow big ones. The two weeks or so after Christmas would be the best time for hunters in these areas to hit the woods and bust a nice buck.

## NOVEMBER 2018

Areas 1, 5 & 6

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 Pre-Rut Starts | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |

## DECEMBER 2018

Areas 1, 5 & 6

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 Pre-Rut Ends | 7 First Scraping Period Starts | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 First Scraping Period Ends | 22 First Breeding Period Starts |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

## JANUARY 2019

Areas 1, 5 & 6

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 First Breeding Period Ends | 5 Second Scraping Period Starts |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 Second Scraping Period Ends |
| 20 Second Breeding Period Starts | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

## FEBRUARY 2019

Areas 1, 5 & 6

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 Second Breeding Period Ends | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | |

# The 2018-2019 DONATE A DEER Campaign has Arrived!

**Hunters for the Hungry's annual "Donate a Deer" campaign is officially under way. Hunters can donate all or part of their harvest from the field to a designated HFH processor on the list. Deer must be field dressed upon donation, and are processed AT NO COST to the hunter. All protein is donated to area charities and food pantries. Thank you for joining us in our mission to help families in need!**

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**For more information call Jimmy Anthony at 225-412-4993 or email HFH at hfh@wlf.la.gov. You can also find a map of our processors online at www.hunters4hungrylouisiana.org.**

## DESIGNATED HFH PROCESSORS

| PARISH/COUNTY | NAME |
|---|---|
| Adams | Pedro's Butcher Shop |
| Adams | Dunn's Processing |
| Adams | Natchez Deer Processors |
| Avoyelles | Juneaus Meat |
| Beauregard | Brown's Slaughterhouse |
| Beauregard | Unruh Processing |
| Bienville | Wild Thang Cusom Meats |
| Bossier | Bellevue Meat Processing |
| Caddo | Cotton's Grocery |
| Calcasieu | Roy's Meat Market |
| Calcasieu | Hackett's Cajun Kitchen |
| Calcasieu | Gillis' Grocery |
| Calcasieu | Holliers Cajun Kitchen |
| Concordia | Pooles Processing |
| Concordia | Raley Processing |
| East Baton Rouge | Kelly's Food Market |
| East Baton Rouge | Tramonte's Meat and Seafood |
| Franklin | PoBoy Farm Meats |
| Franklin | Hatton Meats |
| Ibberville | Roucher's Meat Market |
| Iberia | G & M Processing |
| Jefferson | Badeaux Wild Game |
| Jefferson | Pat Givenco's Deer Depot |
| Lafayette | Little Veron's |
| Lafayette | Southern Deer Processing |
| Lafourche | Bourgeois Meat Market |
| Livingston | Caitoir's Whitetail Smokehouse |
| Madison | 2 Bucks Meat Processing |
| Madison | Powers Processing |
| Morehouse | Hammond's Deer Processing |
| Natchitoches | Dietrich's Processing |
| Natchitoches | M & M Grocery |
| Natchitoches | Troy's Butcher Shop |
| Ouachita Parish | Whetstone's Deer Processing |
| Point Coupee | Bayou Shack Café |
| Point Coupee | Kelly's Cajun Specialties |
| Rapides | Martin Meats |
| Tangipahoa | Tangi Meats |
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| Union | Dean's Slaughterhouse |
| Vermillion | Circle V Meat Processing |
| Webster | Payne Farm Processing |
| West Feliciana | Feliciana Seafood & Deli |

Many hunters believe the best time to hunt during a full moon is midday because deer move at night during that time.

## SUMMARY

With this information in hand hunters should be able to plan their hunts and start watching weather forecasts. While the rut will go on even during warmer conditions, activity is best when temperatures are 60 or lower, and the barometric pressure is around 30.

From what I have seen on the landscape, there appears to be a decent acorn crop developing, so hunting the oak trees during the pre-rut feeding periods is a must.

Tag your deer and report your harvest. And as always, hunt hard, but hunt safe. ▪

**David Moreland** *is a former wildlife biologist with LDWF, having served as the State Deer Biologist for 13 years and as Chief of the Wildlife Division for three years. He and his wife Prudy live in Baton Rouge and own property in East Feliciana Parish.*

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# 'TREST MANI

## 2018

The World Series speckled trout run on eastern Lake Pontchartrain's famed bridges is imminent, and just like in the Fall Classic, home runs and strike outs are both part of the game. Here's how one guide keeps his clients swinging for the fences on the 5.8-mile train bridge — and filling up his box.

When October arrives, Mother Nature typically loosens her grip on the heat and humidity that have gripped the state since early summer, and teases us with a few tantalizing cool fronts that usher in the start of fall.

The Saints are back in full swing, and Major League Baseball culminates at the end of the month with another World Series. The gradual change of seasons coincides with the Fall Classic — and by coincidence, the end of the speckled trout spawn — which pushes fish from their saltier, deepwater summer haunts back inshore to coastal bays, lakes and marshes where they fatten up to ride out the winter.

For Lake Pontchartrain anglers, that means speckled trout will be heading back from where they came this spring, returning first into the Biloxi Marsh and Lake Borgne, then through the Rigolets and finally into the confines of the eastern end of the lake.

Some of the first structures they will encounter are the numerous bridges stacked up there: the I-10 Twin Span, the Highway 11 bridge and the Trestles. It's a perfect storm for the trout — and all the anglers who look forward to the fall run every year.

By Patrick Bonin

# LE'
# A

Capt. Bubby Lamy is hoping for another successful speckled trout run this fall at the Trestles train bridge in eastern Lake Pontchartrain.

# "THOSE FISH JUST MAKE A BIG CIRCLE.

In April or May, we're fishing on the Trestles. Toward the end of May into June, we start fishing out in the Rigolets toward Lake Borgne," explained Capt. Bubby Lamy, with In & Out Charters in Slidell. "As it gets further into the summer, now we're way offshore. That's the progression of where those fish are going if you're looking for trout.

"But in September, the reverse happens. You'll start seeing more fish closer in. They get on the bridges because there's bait and easy accessibility, as far as sitting behind those pilings and being able to get food on incoming and falling tides. They're passing by, and it will hold them there for a while because the water is at the right salinity for them for this time of year. They're coming in to go fatten up."

For anglers looking to catch numbers of fish in the fall, Lamy said the Trestles definitely leads the way, with the Highway 11 bridge known for fewer — but bigger — trout.

Many an angler's dreams of catching a speck of a lifetime meet a watery grave when it comes to the unique vagaries of deepwater jigging in the lake, but Lamy shared some sage advice on how to hit a home run at the train bridge this fall.

## THE RULES OF THE GAME

One important step, even for anglers familiar with Lake Pontchartrain, is understanding the unique nature of the train bridge, he said.

"Don't get fixated on left or right of the pilings. That's the trick — knowing that it's not the same as the Causeway. On the Causeway, the fish are on those pilings, and the whole key is figuring out which side they're on, because the fish will be staged the same way on every piling on that bridge," Lamy said. "But the Trestles is a different game. If you try to play the same Causeway game, you're going to go out there and say, 'There was no fish there today.' No, the fish were there.

"They were just 20 yards from the bridge — and you were casting right at the base of it. The game on the Trestles is distance from the track. If those fish are 10 yards off the bridge, and your boat is 10 yards away and you're throwing to the bridge, you're right on top of them — and you'll never get a bite."

Lamy favors fishing the west side of the Trestles on an incoming tide, especially when he's using plastics, so the tide is coming at him. That way he's throwing into the current, and his lure is mimicking the natural flow of baitfish.

He explained why distance from the bridge was key, and noted (with just a little hyperbole) how fishing pressure contributes to where trout might be holding on a given day.

"If you're fishing on the west side, you've got 100,000 boats out there 10 or 20 feet off the pilings, and you're casting at the pilings. While you're doing that, there's another 100,000 boats riding behind you back and forth and up and down, way off the bridge. So the fish that are by the bridge are getting pounded on with jigheads and all that, so they move further away from the bridge — and with people moving around, maybe even further away from the bridge," he said. "So you have to figure it out, and that's where most people get it wrong — because they just pound the pilings and never cast out the other side of the boat."

## STAY SNAG-FREE

Part of the attraction for specks holding on the train bridge is the mass of old pilings and wooden trestles located beneath the water's surface, where baitfish seek safety and trout look to pick up a quick meal.

>

LEFT: A big key at the Trestles is determining where the fish are in relation to the track each day. BELOW: Casting under the bridge between the pilings and allowing your lure to sink to the bottom will almost always result in a snag.

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"I tell my clients there are two rules," Lamy said with a chuckle. "Don't cast over the tracks, and don't cast underneath them. You don't want to cast under the bridge between the pilings to the other side and then let it fall down. You're going to get snagged every time.

"If you're throwing a plastic and want to swim it back before it hits the bottom, that's fine. But on a Carolina rig with live bait, you're done every time you throw up underneath there."

## RIGGING UP

For Lamy, it's pretty simple: A c with 17-pound mono line and whatever color Matrix Shad soft plastic lure you have confidence in.

"There's a lot of guys who could care less what color their bait is, but I'm not one of those guys," he said. "I'm big on color - if we've got different colors and you catch three fish on one and I don't get a bite, I'm going to put on that same color. The colors can change."

Here's how the guide selects his lure color at the Trestles on a given day.

"Water clarity dictates what color range you should be in. If you're in crystal clear water, you can throw the holy joely or the shrimp creole and get some good action. Magneto is one you you can use with clear or slightly tinted water. Ultraviolet is in-between, and in dirtier water, I love the lemon, the black with the chartreuse tail or the tiger bait."

## FEELING THE BOTTOM

It might sound easy enough to feel your jighead on the bottom, and if you fish in Lake Pontchartrain a lot, it probably is. But if you're more accustomed to catching specks with live shrimp under a cork, deepwater jigging there while dealing with chop at the surface, a ripping current, boat position and lure presentation can get complicated pretty quickly.

"If you're not feeling what it feels like to hit the bottom — if you don't know

Capt. Bubby Lamy typically rigs up with a 3/8-ounce jighead and whatever Matrix Shad soft plastic you have confidence in. Shown here, from the top, are shrimp creole, lemonhead, ultra-violet and magneto.

the difference — then you need to have a heavier jighead until you figure out what the bottom feels like, because every time you're casting, you want to know, 'OK, that was the bottom.' Pop, pop — nothing. Then pop — pop, and you get a strike before you timed it in your head that it should have landed back on the bottom. So that's when you need to set the hook."

## CRACKING THE CODE

Lamy said how the fish want a lure presented also can change daily, and in addition to figuring out where specks are holding in relation to the Trestles, it's the second piece of the puzzle to determine as you begin.

"Some days it's dribbled in the dirt. Other days it's an aggressive pop - pop - pop. Pop - pop - pop. Other days, you can have it in the dirt and lightly pop it up. But most of the time you're getting that bite once you get the bait up, and it's falling back down from whatever you're doing," he said. "Some days you can just let it set. Once it hits the bottom, wait a little while and then —boom, they'll pick it up off the floor.

"You need to try all those things until you crack the code and say, 'OK, we got it now.'"

## PLAN OF ATTACK

At almost 6 miles long, figuring out where to begin on the Trestles can be daunting. There's no better substitute than time on the water, but Lamy shared a few tips on getting started.

"Typically the ends of the bridge will tell you where you should be fishing. If you go all the way to the south end and you don't catch anything, but you pick up two or three on the north end, then you want to work from the north end to almost mid-lake and see how you do."

In addition to the mile posts located on the actual bridge for the train operators, Lamy said many of the concrete pilings are numbered, as are the fire breaks that were put in place to prevent the old wooden structure from being completely destroyed in a single blaze.

"Get reports from other people," he said. "You don't need to know the exact spot, but if somebody says, 'I caught them around 174,' now you can be in the area, and that eliminates the whole rest of the bridge.

"It helps you narrow things down."

Capt. Bubby Lamy shows off a couple of hammer specks from the Trestles.

## SPILLWAY OPENING A HOME RUN?

Although Pontchartrain Basin anglers had to endure yet another opening of the Bonnet Carré Spillway earlier this spring — which poured copious amounts of fresh Mississippi River water into the lake — that typically means a serious trout run the following fall.

Chas Champagne, owner of Matrix Shad lures, said he's hopeful anglers will reap the benefits after the most recent 22-day Spillway opening in March, which occurred to relieve pressure on levees in New Orleans and down river because of an elevated Mississippi.

"It always seems like the fall is better after a Spillway year for whatever reason - providing nutrients, freshwater, bait … Who knows why, but it is," Champagne said. "And it seems like you get more opportunity for a flounder run in the fall after a Spillway opening. October and November are the best for flounder. It usually happens on the west side of the Trestles, and they seem to favor the northern end."

Another key for trout at the Trestles in October is the migration of white shrimp into the Pontchartrain Basin each fall, and Champagne said he already saw evidence of that happening last month.

"I'm already catching them in Lake Catherine, and that's a good sign," he said. "I talk to a lot of shrimpers, and it sounds like a good year … You also want to see a lot of pogies, and I'm seeing good amounts. So it should be a pretty good year.

"Only time will tell." ▪

**Patrick Bonin** *is the editor of Louisiana Sportsman magazine.*

TOP: Kristi Champagne with a hammer Trestles speck. MIDDLE: Walter Cancienne with a nice Trestles trout caught on a lemonhead Matrix Shad. RIGHT: Chas Champagne, owner of Matrix Shad lures, is hopeful this year's spillway opening will mean a solid fall at the Trestles.

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# IN THE 'CROSS'HAIRS

By Chris Ginn

**Crossbows are still looked down upon by some traditional bowhunters, but they definitely provide an appealing option during archery season. Here's what you need to know if you're heading into the woods with one this fall.**

The constant chatter about how crossbows are for cheaters still fills Stephen Chapman's ears, several years after the grumbling first started.

That's because Chapman, the bow tech at Dockside Marine in Bogalusa, deals with bowhunters on a daily basis.

"A lot of people still don't accept crossbows," he said. "But the way I see it, if shooting a crossbow allows you to enjoy the outdoors and keeps you legal, then go for it … up to a point."

Chapman frequently sets his customers up with either Mission or CamX crossbows. He even bought one for himself a couple years ago, but has never used it in the woods.

Although he believes they're great for some people, he feels like they do take away the primitive part of hunting with a bow.

"I had a pacemaker put in a while back, so I bought one," Chapman said. "Pulled it out the box and put it together, and without making any adjustments to it, I was putting all four arrows in a 2-inch circle at 70 yards. But the doctor removed my pacemaker before hunting season started, so I never even took it to the woods. As long as I can pull back a compound bow, that's what I'm going to use."

Chapman's personal experience perfectly portrays his feelings about crossbows.

He thinks they're great tools for people who aren't physically able to pull back compound bows — disabled vets, people with bum shoulders and youngsters — because they allow those folks to still be able to enjoy a hunt.

"For me, archery is archery," Chapman said. "You've got to do your homework and get up close and personal to make your best shot… typically 40 yards or under. Even when I wind up having to use a crossbow, I'm still going to try to get close. Just because you can shoot a deer at 100 yards with a crossbow doesn't mean you should. That's about the only issue I have with them — the temptation to make too long of a shot just because you can."

## PRIMITIVE BRUSH RIFLES

There's no doubt some people buy crossbows with the idea of being able to make a long-range shot in October. Some units are shooting arrow speeds in the mid 400-feet-per-second range, with 2-inch groups out to 100 yards.

"It's almost like hunting with a .30-30," Chapman said. "With an old brush rifle, you don't need a tack-driver. Three rounds in a 3-inch circle at 100 yards is good enough. The only real differences are you're shooting arrows with a crossbow instead of bullets, and you can use one during archery season."

Although Chapman believes most of the hunters he sells crossbows to wind up taking shots at the same distances they would with compound bows, he says knowing in the back of their minds that they could make an 80-yard shot resonates with them.

"What you've got to remember, though, is that a crossbow bolt is going to have a much higher arc to the point of impact 100 yards downrange than a rifle," he explained.

"And while it might feel like you've got a primitive rifle in your hands, the reality is that the tunnel vision you get when a deer walks out could keep you from seeing things above your line of sight that might impact your bolt at the top of the arc. Anything — a limb or even a twig — touches your bolt, and a lot of stuff can go wrong."

The only situation in the field that would make Chapman comfortable making a 70- or 80-yard shot with a crossbow would be an open lane in perfect conditions. At that point, he agreed that it would be very much like using a rifle that shoots an arrow.

## A NEED FOR SPEED

With crossbows running a full 100 feet-per-second faster (440 fps) than even the fastest compound bow (340 fps), there's no doubt they fulfill the need for speed — assuming you need all that speed to begin with.

In Chapman's line of work, the first thing customers ask him about when looking at a crossbow or a compound bow is speed, because everybody thinks speed kills. Hunters feel like they need the fastest crossbow they can get because of their collective fear that a deer will jump the string.

"No doubt crossbows give you the advantage there," he said, "but the way I see it the faster you can shoot, the faster you can miss. Sure, that arrow is going to get downrange quicker, but what's it going to do when it gets there?"

Chapman agreed with the assertion that the faster the arrow the flatter its flight, which could help in a longer shot, but he believes kinetic energy is more important than speed.

"I wish people would get off the speed kick" he said. "I've tried shooting flatter and faster, but it's like throwing a ping pong ball at 500 miles an hour; it's going to sting really badly. But take a golf ball and throw it at 100 miles an hour and it's going to break bones."

This is why Chapman is an advocate for a little bit slower crossbow shooting a little bit heavier bolt.

continued >

Nine-year-old Natalee Ponder from Quitman took this doe with her crossbow during an early-season hunt in Jackson Parish, evidence that crossbows are great for introducing kids to bowhunting.

While hunting Avoyelles Parish with her crossbow, 11-year-old Raelyn Crain put some meat in the family freezer.

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New Roads bowhunter Hunter Shaffett still had to get close with his crossbow to take this nice buck.

"Although a crossbow has a speed advantage, it comes at a price," Chapman said. "A compound bow is a lot quieter than a crossbow. We do have dampeners you can put on them, and some of the more high-end crossbows like the CamX A4, Mission Sub 1, and the Ravin … they're the quietest and fastest — top of the line. I work on a bunch of fast bows, though, and the faster a bow is the more likely you are to have problems with it."

## CROSSBOW ADVANTAGES

With a little imagination and some extra money, a compound bow hunter could conceivably hunt from just about any kind of stand; however, hunting with a crossbow makes it easier to hunt from whatever stand you choose.

"You really have no stand limitations with a crossbow," Chapman said. "None of this is set in stone, but compound bow hunters typically hunt your lock-ons, climbers and ladders. You can hunt in box and ground blinds, but they have to be big enough for you to draw, and you have to have those tall, narrow windows on the corners. With a crossbow, as long as you can get your scope on it, you can shoot it."

Crossbows also have the advantage of being able to take a shot with little movement, which minimizes your chances of a deer spotting you in the stand. Compound bow hunters would argue that it's all part of the challenge of bowhunting, but there's no arguing less movement means less attention.

"You're sitting in the stand like you would be if you were holding a rifle," Chapman said. "You're already cocked and ready to go, so all you've got to do is pull the trigger. No worrying about having to stand up or getting busted on the draw."

## PACKAGE DEALS

Like just about everything else in the world, the main trend in crossbows has been to make them smaller and lighter. You don't have to think too far back to remember crossbows that had limbs that looked 3 feet wide.

"Man, when you shot those things out of a box stand those limbs would go forward, and you might wind up breaking your limbs or smoking your stand," Chapman said. "Now the reverse limbs

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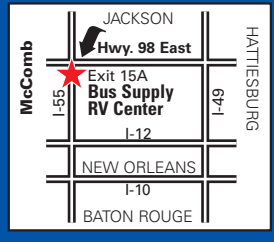


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are popular because they move sideways and not forward. Heck, the CamX A4 is only 10 ½ inches wide.

"Compact and faster, that's where we're headed."

Another trend in crossbows is for them to come in a package that includes everything you need to jump right into the woods. And a fully decked out crossbow ready to hunt can be had for $850 to $1,000.

"You're going to spend $1,000 just for a naked compound bow nowadays," Chapman said. "Then you're looking at buying another $700 worth of stuff to put on it to get it ready to shoot. Of course, you could go higher or lower on crossbows and compounds depending on what you want to spend, but those are good averages."

The way Dockside Marine bow tech Stephen Chapman sees it, if crossbows get more people in the woods enjoying the outdoors, he's all for them.

## CROSSBOW SETUP

Since most crossbows already come with the bolts, there isn't much to consider except for which broadhead you're going to shoot.

While acknowledging that there are some good fixed blades on the market, Chapman said he personally would go with a mechanical blade because they consistently fly a lot better than fixed blades.

"I want the head that's going to fly most like my field points," he said. "And most mechanicals are going to fly like that right of the box. Other than that, I'd shoot a 100-grain head on a 100-grain shaft with a 50-grain insert. That's going to give me 150 grains forward weight, which is going to give me more accuracy, more momentum and more penetration when it hits the animal."

Regardless of all the negative crossbow talk he's heard the last few years, Chapman said he likes the crossbow effect because they allow a lot more people to hunt during archery season.

"Outside of taking unethical long-range shots, I can agree with them 100 percent," he concluded. "It's all about enjoying the outdoors and the wildlife. If a crossbow makes it possible for you to get in the woods, then so be it.

"Just get the best setup you can afford. As long as you have fun and are legal, don't worry about what other people think." ▪

**Chris Ginn** *has been covering hunting and fishing in Louisiana since 1998. He lives with his wife Jennifer and children Matthew and Rebecca along the Bogue Chitto River in rural Washington Parish. His blog can be found at chrisginn.com.*

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# Small game — BIG FUN

By Keith LaCaze

Squirrel season opens this month — here are some tactics to help you connect with bushy tails.

Saturday, Oct. 6, is the opening day of squirrel season in Louisiana. For the hunter, this eagerly anticipated day means several things — all of them good.

Fall is here. Hunting season is here. It's the first big weekend at the camp. The list goes on and on, but at the core of it all is this simple fact: For fun and challenging hunting, squirrels are hard to beat.

Historically in Louisiana, as in all the southeastern U. S., squirrel hunting has always been extremely popular. The season typically opened a month in advance of gun seasons for deer, so most hunters focus on bushy tails until then. Where I grew up, everyone hunted squirrels and it was customary for kids to start out on squirrels before being allowed to "graduate" up to deer. For many of us, it just isn't hunting season without squirrels.

But more recently, deer hunting has soared in popularity. Early archery and primitive weapons seasons put hunters in deer stands as early as September, and through the entire month of October. Squirrel hunting was pushed to the back burner, and as a result some of the woods craft and hunting skills it teaches have been lost. That's a shame and a lost hunting opportunity, since most places with good deer habitat will have some squirrel timber as well.

Anyone who skipped over the basics of squirrel hunting might realize they are missing out on additional hunting opportunities. Do you have children, or know beginning hunters wanting to give squirrels a try? For the beginners and those of us who need a little refresher, let's take a look at some basic squirrel hunting techniques that are sure to put you on the right track.

**WHERE TO FIND THEM** UP NEXT >

## WHERE TO FIND THEM

Squirrels feed on a wide range of nuts, berries, fruits and grains, and are found near available food sources as the seasons dictate. In the fall their top choices are acorns, pecans, hickory nuts, beech mast and green pine cones, plus a number of other less common seeds and berries. As a rule of thumb, in bottomlands look for oaks and pecans. In mixed pine and hardwoods, focus on creek bottoms and look for hickory, oak and beech.

Pre-scout the hunt area and look for trees bearing acorns or other mast, with fresh squirrel cuttings on the ground. Pay attention to pines where squirrels have cut heavily on green cones. Squirrels start cutting pine cones in mid- to late-summer, and rely heavily on them until acorns and other fall masts have matured. Areas where squirrels have fed on pines that are in close proximity to oaks, hickories or pecans heavily laden with mast are top squirrel producers.

Locate feed trees with nearby or surrounding low growth timber, or trees with abundant vines. Remember those locations and be sure to hunt them. Why? Squirrels are preyed upon by hawks, owls and other predators. They use dense cover such as a low canopy or thick vine growth to travel to and from the feed tree, taking advantage of the protection from hawks and owls while staying out of reach of bobcats, foxes and coyotes.

## Quick tips

- The daily bag limit for squirrels is eight, and the possession limit is 24.
- Definitely wear camo, and add a camo face mask.
- Hunt near water. Squirrels will go to water daily if it's available.
- Use a call to get squirrels to bark or approach out of curiosity.

Father and son squirrel hunts have long been a favorite of the author and his son Darin (left). This photo was taken in the mid-90s.

Look for pine cone cuttings. Both older and fresh cuttings are seen here — a sure sign squirrels are around.

## HUNT FAST OR HUNT SLOW?

Good squirrel hunters fall into two categories. Some hunt fast, moving through the woods at a steady pace, letting their eyes do the work of spotting any moving squirrels. When a bushy tail is located they move in, make the shot and spend a little time looking things over thoroughly before moving on to the next squirrel. This method has both advantages and disadvantages.

The upside is if squirrels are widely distributed over the area, the fast mover will encounter and bag more. He also will be dealing with a moving squirrel, which is easier to see and shoot, plus he's not wasting time standing around in a spot devoid of action. The downside is if the hunting area is small, he will run out of ground pretty quick. He will also walk past squirrels sitting still while feeding, and those that saw him and hid.

There's good and bad news for the slow mover, too. If feed is scarce, the slow hunter may find and stick with a good feed tree, which can attract squirrels from a distance. It is not unheard of to sit in one spot on a prime feed tree and take a limit. And when squirrels are not moving much, the slow hunter is apt to see or hear more when the animals finally do decide to move while feeding or changing locations. The bad news is if squirrels are scarce, chances are a slow stalker won't go far enough to reach a better spot.

**LOOK — BUT LISTEN, TOO**
UP NEXT >

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## LOOK — BUT LISTEN, TOO

It's easy to spot vigorously moving limbs and leaves when a squirrel shakes things up moving through the trees or hanging out on the end of a branch to reach an acorn. But it gets a whole lot tougher when they are tucked in tight in a big pine tree gnawing on a pine cone, or hiding behind leaves while sawing on a hickory nut.

At those times, the hunter's ears will often reveal what can't be seen. Listen for the sound of sprinkling rain. If it sounds like rain, but isn't raining, start looking for the source. Falling cuttings sound just like rain drops. Find the source, and you'll find the squirrel. Bushy tails can also easily be heard cutting through the rock-hard shell of a hickory nut.

Additionally, listen for the sound of squirrel claws on tree bark. It is not unusual to find a couple of squirrels playing chase up and down a tree, and it can be heard quite well on quiet mornings. A squirrel's alarm bark will give it away as well. It's often confused with bird calls by beginners, so learn the difference — and when it's heard, start looking. The squirrel is usually in gun range.

A pair of fox squirrels sitting beside their nest, which is always a good indicator that squirrels are nearby.

**SHOTGUN OR RIFLE?**
UP NEXT >


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- 40 Acres ... $3,300/AC
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- 170 Acres ... $4,600/AC

*Desoto*
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*Livingston Parish*
- 7.5 Acres ... $90,000
- 12 Acres ... $144,000
- 38 Acres ... $10,000/AC

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- 21 Acres ... $3,095/AC

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The author enjoys hunting squirrels with a .22 — it's great rifle practice in anticipation of deer season.

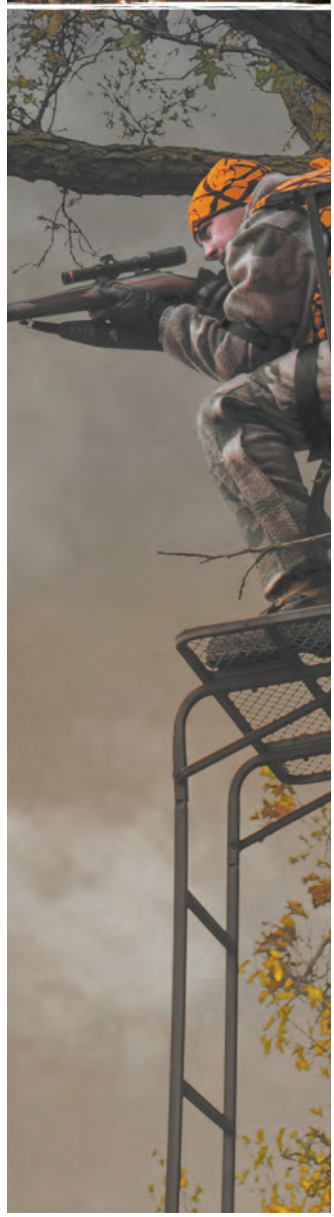
## SHOTGUN OR RIFLE?

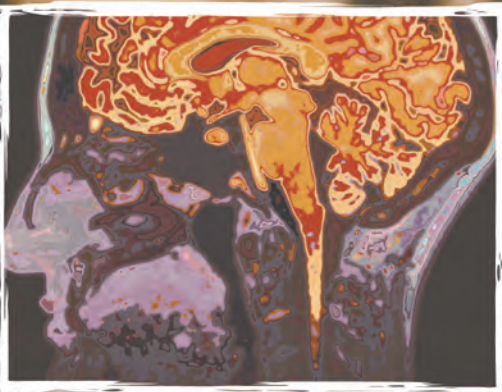
The majority of squirrel hunters choose a shotgun. That's the better way to go in early-season when things are still green, and visibility is no more than a fleeting glimpse through leaves on a running grey squirrel. Choose modified or full choke tubes, and pattern the gun with 6-, 5- and 4-shot to determine which works best. Squirrels are tough, and require a solid hit to avoid crippling. A shotgun is definitely recommended for beginners.

Using a .22- or .17-caliber rifle will certainly make things more interesting — if not more frustrating. My son, brother and I all use .22s almost exclusively for squirrels. We love rifles, and hunting squirrels gives us the opportunity to get a lot more shooting done than we ever will in a deer stand. The .22s also give us much needed practice shooting from improvised field positions in actual hunting situations. So it's great prep for deer and elk.

Don't let this October go by without giving squirrel hunting a try. If you haven't done it in a while, it's a great return to the basics. And for first timers, you'll get to find out what you've been missing. ▪

*Retired Wildlife Enforcement Lieutenant Colonel* **Keith LaCaze** *spent 34 years with the LDWF beginning in 1977. LaCaze is happily married to wife Mitzi and the father of two children.*





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| Max Horsepower | 250HP |
| Approx. Fuel Capacity | 71 gal. |
| Freshwater Tank Capacity* | 15 gal. |
| Rear Livewells | 20 gal. (x2) |
| Console Cooler | 12 gal. |
| Draft (up) | 13" |
| Deadrise at Transom | 15° |
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By Jerald Horst

# THE DELACROIX TRIFECTA

Specks, reds and bass are all doable on a nice fall day in Delacroix. Here's what you need to know to pull off the triple play.

The definition of trifecta is a run of three wins or grand events.

"Let's go to Delacroix and do a trifecta. "The trout are for eating, the redfish are for fighting and the bass are for fun."

The speaker was a big man — tall and all of 300 pounds. He spoke with authority.

Gene Hoover retired as a high school principal four years ago. Already a bass fisherman, he focused on competitive bass fishing. After he fished the Open Series with BASS, he got the tournament bug partly out of his system.

Then he earned his license to become a newly minted speckled trout, redfish and bass charter guide (Gene's Charter Service, 225-206-0750) out of Delacroix.

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# "WHY DELACROIX?" I ASKED HIM.

"Because of its diversity," he replied. "Last trip we had specks, reds, bass, black drum, sheepshead and white bass.

"From September to April, I fish inside (interior marshes) to catch all species. From May to August, I can fish the outer edges of Black Bay and get all the action anyone could want.

"I've been fishing the area at least 15 years. My good friend Chef KD will be fishing with us. You don't mind, huh?"

Chef KD, born Kevin Diez and a native of Ascension Parish, is also a freshly-coined guide (Chef KD's Outdoor Adventures, 225-205-2665), whose stomping grounds include Delacroix, as well as Grand Isle.

Diez is famous for his cooking and catering, and now is also cohost of the Paradise Louisiana TV show.

## THE BIG DAY

It was late October.

The morning was like a madhouse. The road from New Orleans to Delacroix was clogged with trucks towing boats — bass boats, bay boats, aluminum boats, mud boats with surface drives—anything that floated.

Every service station had boats at each pump island. Convenience stores had rigs littering the lots, with their owners inside grabbing sausage biscuits.

Sweetwater Marina in Delacroix was even worse, with a long line of rigs on the road, trailers backing every which-way. Its side-by-side ramps were firing off boats like a double-barrel shotgun working on auto-load.

A traffic director stood in the dark in the middle of the narrow road barking out commands, generally making everyone equally mad.

"That's Delacroix in the fall," quipped Hoover patiently. "It gets even worse when duck season opens."

Hoover had lured me into this tangled web with his promise of a trifecta.

## START WITH SPECKLED TROUT

The big guy explained the trifecta strategy for the day. "We'll start with trout first because trout will only bite with a current. When the tide quits, they quit."

"Trout are a schooling fish. We get on them early, we can catch one after another," chimed in Diez.

"Bass are more structure-oriented and are more predictable," Hoover went on. "Redfish will be in the grass chasing minnows, so we will be able to find them later."

Hoover piloted us to a hard turn in the bayou between Grand Lake and Stump Lagoon. The main channel of the bayou swung further out and was 10 feet deep. The water near the point was 3 feet deep, and the current from the rising tide formed an eddy behind the point, inside the wide swing in the bayou.

"If the tide was falling we would be fishing in the lake, where the bayou empties into the lake," said Hoover. "But it is rising now and the trout should be stacked up feeding on shrimp."

It was a slaughter from the first cast. Diez was the official counter, and they had 25 fish in the box by 8:10 a.m. They got tired of running to the ice box strapped down in the back of the boat for every fish, so they just left it open and unerringly launched trout from the bow deck into the box.

Finding the feeding fish was the trick. Once located, the gear they used was simple: Both had oval rattling clip-on corks on their lines, set 3 feet above plastic-tipped jigheads.

Fall gear for trout is simple at Delacroix: Matrix Shad plastics on jigheads tied beneath oval, rattling clip-on corks.

**BELOW:** Chef KD makes an ice slush in his fish box by adding water to it.

### TIP OF THE DAY NO.1

Kevin Diez, as a chef and food person, is critically interested in the quality of the fish he brings home. To produce the best finished product, he adds water to the ice in the ice chest to make an ice-slush.

"The fish chill better, they are less slimy and they are easier to fillet because they are not all curled up," he said.

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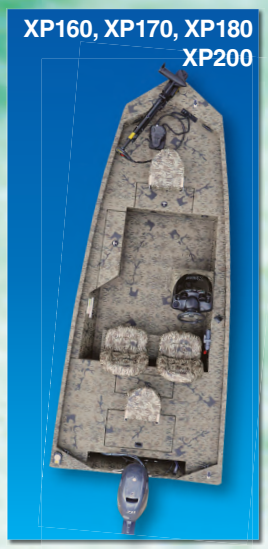

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I like clip-ons because they are easy to adjust. The depth I fish changes from spot to spot," explained Hoover. "Another thing," added Diez, "is that tie-on corks add two more knots to fail."

Hoover used 1/8-ounce jigheads. Diez liked 1/16-ounce because the lighter jighead allowed the plastic bait to flutter down more naturally. Shrimp Creole was the predominant color used.

Diez used straight 14-pound Stren clear blue florescent monofilament. Hoover had 30-pound PowerPro braided line, tipped with a 6-foot-long, 15-pound Trilene Big Game mono leader.

They retrieved their lures with gentle nudges and pops. At 8:45 a.m., the body count was up to 44, then the bite slowed. They quit at 9:55 a.m. with 45 specks.

"The key indicators to finding trout in Delacroix in the fall are finding bait, or working birds and fishing current lines," Hoover said. "Most trout here summer in Black Bay or further out, and then move into the interior marshes between late September and early November.

"When you get a cold front, the wind blows the water out of the marshes. When it comes back in, the trout will come with it." That was exactly the scenario that played out.

"A few trout remain residents year-round in the marsh," noted Diez. "We call them golden trout because they have a different color."

## THEN CAME BASS

"Let's see some green now," grunted Hoover as he cranked up the boat. It wasn't a long run — 200 yards maybe, before stopping near several cuts in the bayou bank.

I questioned fishing the mouths of cuts on a rising tide.

"You have to remember," lectured Diez, "that the water goes into the cuts on the upwind side of the marsh, through the ponds and out on the downwind side. Because of erosion, the marsh is like Swiss cheese — holes everywhere."

It also didn't seem logical catching

**BELOW:** Gene Hoover applies wraps of black electrical tape to his rod to mark it for quickly measuring fish.

### TIP OF THE DAY NO.2

Gene Hoover makes fast work of measuring fish by wrapping black electrical tape around his rod at measured lengths. Hot speckled trout bites usually last a limited time, and time spent going to an ice chest lid or ruler to measure fish is time lost from fishing. When the bite is over, it's over. ■

A single-bladed Delta Lures spinner with a Matrix Shad on the hook instead of a skirt caught Hoover's bass. The Dip-N-Glow dyed tail of the lure is visible lying inside the lower jaw of the fish.

freshwater largemouth bass and saltwater speckled trout so close together. As if reading my mind, Hoover spoke.

"We haven't had a major hurricane in a while, and they ran the freshwater diversion from the Mississippi River 24-7 during the oil spill. The bass population has spread all over the northern reaches of the Delacroix marsh.

"We can catch bass anywhere we fish today. Where we just caught the trout, we could probably have caught some bass if we had fished close to the bank."

The difference between catching bass and trout was micro-habitat (open water versus near banks and in cuts) and lure choice.

The pair switched lures. Diez went wormy, with a 6-inch june bug-colored Zoom worm on a 2/0 Owner offset shank wide gap worm hook. It was Texas-rigged with an 1/8-ounce tungsten weight pegged on the line.

"Small hook; small weight," he said. "You are fishing in 2 to 2 ½ feet of water and don't need a lot of weight. I like a natural fall."

Hoover went with a Delta Lures single-bladed safety pin spinner with a gold No. 4 Colorado blade. But instead of a skirt, he put an ultra-violet (although he admitted his favorite color is green hor-

>>>

A short wooden block can be used to temporarily elevate the head of a trolling motor, reducing fouling in weeds or dragging on the bottom.

## TIP OF THE DAY NO.3

Both Hoover and Diez carry a several-inch-long piece of 2x4 board in their boat to place between the trolling motor mount and its cradle. Inserting and removing the block is much faster than is loosening the nut on the bracket and sliding the motor's shaft upward when they need to elevate or lower the power head when fishing in shallows or weeds.

Another advantage to the use of a block is that it angles the head of the motor upward, helping it to glide over submerged grasses rather than dig into them.

If they kick the motor into high and it wants to jump up, they simply use their free hand to hold it down. ▪


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net) Matrix Shad on the hook. He dipped the tail of the plastic lure in chartreuse Dip-N-Glow.

Things started with a bang there, too. The mouth of the first cut produced five bass, the biggest of which was 3 pounds. "You can expect to catch bigger bass here than typical marsh bass," Hoover said.

"We had a tournament here recently, and it took 16 pounds to win. Four-pounders are not uncommon."

Their tactics were simple. They fished the mouth of each cut, then trolled and fished into each a short distance, then fished out and moved on to the next cut.

## AND FINISH WITH REDFISH

They were surprised that they hadn't pick up a redfish while bass fishing. Since the reds didn't want to play with them there, they moved to a broken marsh bordered on three sides by Bayou Terre Aux Boeufs, Bayou Gaudet and Lake John.

"You gotta find reds," Hoover croaked. "It's definitely more sight-fishing than with bass. Broken marshes (a South Louisiana term for marshes fragmented into smaller pieces by erosion) are ideal. Sometimes they will get on edges of grass beds in lakes, bayous and ponds, too."

Diez added, "At high tide, they go into shallow marsh ponds. At low tide, they leave the ponds and go to points in bayous. I've seen 25 fish in one little area."

"Look for bait," Hoover said. "Redfish move around a lot more than bass," explained Diez. "One redfish may work a quarter-mile of bank. You can see them pushing a V-wake, or you will see bait jumping ahead of the fish."

Diez shifted lures to an 1/8-ounce white Strike King double-blade spinner with a willow leaf blade on top. Both blades were silver. Hoover stayed with his bass spinner.

They cast strictly toward the bank for redfish, unless they saw a red move or blow up on baitfish in the open. They landed one, then another, then another.

They quit at 12:45 p.m.

"I hear that shrimp po' boy at Last Stop calling me," Hoover sang out cheerfully.

Diez grinned. He knew food, too! ▪

**Jerald Horst** *is a retired Louisiana State University professor of fisheries. He is an active writer, book author and outdoorsman. Jerald may be reached at jerald@rockinghorst.com.*

## TIPS FOR THE 'TRIFECTA'

While Delacroix fishing is fabulous, it takes some skill and know-how to consistently connect on a trifecta. Gene Hoover and Chef KD Diez give some tips to help anglers make successful trips:

**1)** The peak time to score a trifecta is from the end of September to the end of December, peaking in late October and early November.

**2)** If you don't know Delacroix, buy a Standard Map Company map before the trip.

**3)** Best of all, use a guide for your first trip — and still buy a map.

**4)** Live shrimp will help assure a successful trip. Generally, live bait will catch twice as many speckled trout as will artificial lures.

**5)** Pick your days. Right before a cold front is best. Right after a front is worst. Allow two or three days after a front before going.

**6)** If you want to talk to Capt. Jack Payne, owner of Sweetwater Marina, get there early. His information on where fish are biting is accurate because he captains a charter boat most days. But be aware that he will be busy most mornings.

**7)** If the fish are hitting plastics but not taking it, fish deeper or change colors.

**8)** If water temperatures are below 60° F in the morning, fish spots like the outside bends of natural bayous and Oak River until the sun warms the water.

**9)** Bring the marina's phone number in case you get stuck when the tide is low. It is easy to get bottomed out, even in the middle of some major bays or pipeline canals. If the water is low, don't go anywhere you don't know on low tide. Do your exploring on high tide.

**10)** Bring a push pole.

**11)** Keep your lure selection simple — a couple of your favorite colors of plastic for use under a popping cork or on a safety pin spinner. On overcast days, colors like june bug are good for bass baits. On bright days, watermelon red 6-inch worms on small hooks with small weights are a good choice.

Finesse fishing for bass with a lot of colors isn't needed at Delacroix. Bass have to compete with specks, reds, drum and other fish and are not picky. A bone-colored topwater lure is good to have, too.

**12)** Stay away from duck blinds and duck ponds during duck season. You often can't fish the same places you did before the season, unless you don't go out until after 10 a.m.

**13)** Start your mornings with trout or bass because redfish are less finicky about the time of day they bite.

**14)** All three species are found in the marsh, but may relate to different parts of it. Trout like open water. Bass like cuts and drains, while redfish like shorelines.

Fragments of eroded marsh with lots of open water around them are called "broken marsh" and are very productive for redfish. **INSET:** Both Hoover and Diez used safety pin spinners for redfish.

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Putting big bucks on the wall is a tradition with this North Louisiana family. Here are the steps they take to consistently make it happen.

# KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

By Kinny Haddox

The rut won't start for six to eight weeks now in the deer woods of Union Parish. But one family of successful deer hunters is already make plans and preparations for being there when it happens.

That includes monitoring game cameras in strategic locations, finishing up stand preparations and double-checking equipment.

History shows it's a good bet all that planning will yield results — mainly more trophy mounts on the wall. The Jones family has deep roots in the parish, hunting their old home area and surrounding property for half a century. Started by Brooks Jones, then his son, Scott, and now grandson Ben and his two young sons, that tradition is something they value deeply.

"I can remember the fun I had with my grandad, Brooks, and it's something we intend to just keep passing down the line," said Ben, a senior vice president at nearby Marion State Bank. "We've killed a lot of deer and had a lifetime of experiences. Most of our deer hunting stories are about the big ones we've killed, but the little things are important, too. I still get ribbed about my early years of going with Papaw Brooks. I'd sit in the corner and want to go to sleep, but he would tell me right before daylight to get up and look — it was time for the deer to come out. Finally I asked him, 'Papaw, do these deer have watches or something?'"

Deer do seem to have watches, but they certainly don't usually move on the same time schedule as hunters. And during the peak of the rut, neither time nor distance seem to mean anything to big bucks. That's what makes the story of Ben's best-ever buck last fall so interesting.

"The big 10-point I killed last November was amazing because of the symmetry, the size of the antlers and the fact that I had no history with the deer," Ben said. "Normally with a big deer like that, we've seen him on camera several times, often more than one or two seasons.

"But this one, well — it was just a matter of being in the right place at the right time."

**A PERFECT 10** UP NEXT >

>

## A PERFECT 10

Ben's story goes like this. After weeks of preparation, he had taken off the week before Thanksgiving to hunt. But on that Saturday, he decided to take his youngest son Shepard out for a quick hunt. It was cold and they had a Mr. Buddy heater going. Ben recalled Shepherd was sitting there jabbering when a doe eased out into the right shooting lane about 240 yards away. Ben raised his .300 mag out of the window, thinking there might be more to come. That time of year, does moving usually have company not far behind, and that proved true this day, too.

Less than a minute later, a bigger deer came out of the clearcut and crossed the lane into the big woods with its head down. Ben told Shepard it had to be a buck. Ten minutes didn't go by when a doe stepped out of the woods just 30 yards away and went right back up the right lane. That was unusual because they usually went left to the feeder. Before the deer got far up the lane, the big 10-point stepped back out about 50 yards away.

"All I saw was antlers," Ben recalled. "Shepard said, 'Dad, that's a big one.'"

He didn't even have time to think. With the gun already out the window, Ben told his son to cover his ears — and two seconds later he shot. The big deer hit the ground right where it had stood.

Ben was shocked that he hadn't seen this deer live or on camera, noting it had to be at least 5 years old. It ended up scoring 139 6/8 inches, and weighed about 190 pounds.

Jones said there are two simple lessons from that kill: No. 1, if you aren't in the woods, you aren't going to kill a deer. That's the standard motto of Ben's uncle Gary Cobb, also a regular member of the family hunting parties. They could have just stayed at the camp knowing they had a full week to hunt, but they went to the woods anyway. And No. 2, big bucks will travel a long way. During the rut especially, a "long way" can mean several miles in a short time period.

Ben has also developed some other good tactics over the years that can help other hunters.

"First of all, you have to be safe in the woods," he said. "That's the most important thing. Whether you are climbing up a ladder into a box stand, or up a tree with a climber, be safe. Let others know where you are, too. Don't sleep late and have to rush. Give yourself plenty of time and have the right equipment. Never go up a tree without a safety harness."

Second, scent is so important. Even in a box stand, you need to play the wind. Ben sprays himself down with scent killer when he goes in the woods, and if he's bowhunting, he uses ScentLok clothing.

**THE 'SECRET WEAPON'** UP NEXT >

Ben Jones with the big one from last fall minutes after it was killed and tagged.

# IT'S A FAMILY TRADITION

Ben's dad, Scott Jones, knows about being in the right place at the right time, too. When he was just a teenager, he often went hunting with his dad and a group of friends. One day a neighbor told them about several big bucks running around in his pasture.

The group gathered and plotted a plan to cover the pasture, and sent Scott with his 16-gauge shotgun to a little patch of woods where he found a cozy spot in a treetop to hide out.

A few minutes later he heard something rustling the leaves behind him, and figured it was just a possum. He had heard possums in the woods before, but he'd never seen or heard a deer. Finally he turned around and looked, and there, just 20 yards away, was a massive thick-beamed 10-point staring right at him. Both of them were stunned, but Scott managed to fire off two rounds at the deer.

He missed, but the deer only went a few steps. Apparently it had never seen a hunter, either. Scott chambered his last shell — a slug — and hit the buck squarely behind the shoulders and dropped it.

That mount still hangs in their camp, clearly labeled, "Killed by Scott Jones in Jerry Burgess' Pasture. November 26, 1967." ▪

Scott Jones holds up his 1967 10-point buck, also a result of being in the right place at the right time.

>

## THE SECRET WEAPON

Third on the list is his secret weapon, something many of his hunting family and friends still give him a hard time about.

"I don't go to the woods without the little Primos Original Can bleat call," he said. "Most of the bucks I've killed have responded to this call, and a lot of them that have I let walk. Sometimes more than one buck will respond."

But using the bleat call correctly is important. Ben does two quick, long bleats, then waits about 30 seconds and does one more long bleat. If he doesn't see a deer come and check it out within 10 minutes, that usually means a buck isn't in hearing range.

Ben and his family also rely a lot on past experience, and a good number of game cameras to see what's going on in the woods. They don't actually get out and scout trails in deer territory, because they feel like the less intrusion there is, the more chances of the animals moving about freely.

The secret weapon of Ben's deer hunting success is his Primos "The Original Can" bleat call.

## FINDING AN ACORN

The defining identification characteristic of Ben's big 10-point was an "acorn" tip on one of the right beams. An acorn tip occurs when a buck damages an antler while it's still in velvet. The soft tip breaks or is injured, and as the tissue heals, it produces an "acorn." ■

Ben with the big 10-point, 140-class monster he took last fall. Several past trophies on the camp wall are evident in the background.

**Kinny Haddox** *has been writing magazine and newspaper articles about the outdoors in Louisiana for 40 years. He also publishes a daily website, lakedarbonnelife.com. He and his wife, DiAnne, live on Lake D'Arbonne in Farmerville.*

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

When it comes to having plenty of big deer to hunt, Jones said it's pretty easy: You've got to be willing to let some good young deer walk, and you have to actively manage the number of does — because too many does will scatter the big bucks.

He uses a variety of guns. His "go-to" big deer gun is the Browning .300 Win Mag, and he shoots 180-grain Federal Fusion bullets.

He also has a .243 that he takes with the boys, and loves to shoot his .444 Marlin primitive weapon, sometimes even in the regular gun season. When he bowhunts, he uses a Hoyt Vector with a long draw to fit his tall frame. He shoots Rage Hypodermic arrows, and doesn't change equipment very often.

Other than that, he keeps things pretty simple. He carries a couple of pairs of gloves in his backpack, along with two or three headlamps that allow him to remain hands-free in the dark. He carries a grunt call, but uses it sparingly. The Joneses have a variety of stands on their property, from some of the old pipe-leg stands his grandpa put up to newer box stands and a few hand-made lean-to stands.

"You have to have gear that you are comfortable with and confident in," Jones said. "Other than that, don't overcomplicate it. The most important things are what we've talked about: Get in the woods, learn as much about the deer and their habits as you can and just have fun." ▪

Ben Jones and his son Shepard with the results of a successful hunt.

**BASEBALL AND BUCKS** UP NEXT >

Ben Jones, shown here on his rookie card, spent time in the Yankees organization after college.

# BASEBALL AND BUCKS

Hunting isn't the only sport Ben Jones has excelled at since he was a youngster. He was an excellent baseball player, going from youth all-star to high school all-state at Ouachita Christian School, and then to college ball at the University of Louisiana-Monroe.

As a junior, Ben was drafted by the New York Yankees and pursued his big league dream for several years.

"Baseball at the higher levels is a tough sport," he said. "You fail a lot, and you learn to deal with it and bounce back. You don't accept it, but you deal with it.

"To be honest, it's a lot like hunting. Sometimes things go right. Sometimes they don't. It feels bad when you strike out. It feels good when you hit a home run. You just have to feel your way along and keep working. It takes a lot of things working in your favor to be successful in the moment."

So which was is more exciting, playing ball or dropping a hammer buck? Ben's dad, Scott, has the answer.

"I can tell you this," Scott said. "Ben never hyperventilated over hitting a home run. He never had to drop everything and call me when he won a baseball game. But when he shoots a big deer, he can't breathe for a few minutes and he really gets pumped."

There's even another level of excitement added now that he's hunting with his boys.

"Oh, as excited as I get killing a big buck, it was twice that exciting when Brooks got his first buck, and I'm sure it will be the same when Shepard gets his." ▪

This trail cam shot from a neighboring club showed the big buck more than 4 miles away several times on previous nights.

# FOLLOWING THE DEER TRAIL ... BACKWARDS

While Ben Jones hadn't seen any previous evidence that the big 10-point he killed last November even existed, the monster left a trail of other hunters watching and hoping for a glimpse in daylight hours. An unmistakable acorn tip on one of the deer's antlers left no doubt to its identity.

As technology infiltrates every aspect of our lives, and almost every event is recorded in some form or fashion, the same thing is happening in deer hunting. The big buck that Jones harvested had been hot and heavy on the trail of does, and it left irrefutable evidence of its travels on camera. Most hunters already figure that big bucks move a lot during the rut — but just how far they move continues to amaze them.

"I know the bucks move a lot during the rut, but this deer made his way through a 4-mile wide area his last few days," Jones said. "The most remarkable evidence was the fact that he showed up on a game camera at my cousin Dan Preaus' stand just a couple of hours before he showed up in the shooting lane at my stand. Those two stands are 2 ½ miles away from each other."

After further examination of another camera on Ben's club, the big deer had made at least two trips across Ben's shooting lane the night before it was shot. And the same deer also was spotted on camera even further away on a neighboring hunting club days before.

"The norm for us with a big deer is that we see him often on camera, usually for more than one year as he grows. But this one? I had no history of him. We did everything right, but to be honest, this one was just luck," he said. "It was a case of being in the right place at the right time." ▪

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Early starts can deliver a daybreak bonus for ambitious fall anglers. INSET: Keep a variety of baits handy for the fall bite — and make sure at least one is a topwater.

By David A. Brown

# TOLEDO BEND'S FALL FEEDING FRENZY

Angling pros share some **do's and don'ts** to maximize your time on the water and catch more fish.

Days grow shorter; appetites grow larger. Water temperatures will be falling, but bass aggression is spiking.

That's the game plan for the annual fall 'gorge-fest,' and the state's premier fishery, Toledo Bend, provides awesome theater for showcasing this seasonal opportunity — and learning a few pointers on how to maximize your productivity.

There are lots of ways to break this down, so let's keep it simple with a sampling of what to do — and what not to do — during the fall feeding frenzy.

## THE DO'S

**FISH THE CREEKS:** This is where you'll find the majority of the shad, which head toward these protected areas sometime in late-September or early-October. The formula is simple: Bass follow the food. But FLW regional pro Stephen Johnston said the degree to which this proves true may be surprising.

"A lot of times people don't realize how far into the creek the fish will follow the shad," he said. "You want to follow the creek as far as you can and fish shallower than you might normally think to fish.

"The bank of the creek may be a foot or two deep, but the creek may be 3 ½ to 4 feet. If you can find a little dog leg or a creek bend before it gets too shallow to get a boat in, you don't want to go too far, but you want to go far enough so you have the deepest part in there." >

>

**START EARLY:** The fall feeding motivation could yield good action any time of the day, but the first gilded rays of sunshine to fall upon the water will almost always spur a rally you don't want to miss.

As Bassmaster Elite pro Kevin VanDam explains, bass do their best work in low light, so don't spend too much time stirring your oatmeal. Get out there and get after them.

"This is a high-percentage time to cover water, fish fast and catch fish while they have their guard down and they're more aggressive," VanDam said. "They'll chase baits farther, and the strike zone gets bigger."

Pay attention to weather patterns, as those pesky fall cold fronts can fiddle with the schedule. Basically, look for even greater feeding activity ahead of and during a front's passage, but once post-frontal conditions bring the dreaded blue bird skies, expect the bite to fizzle until that high pressure moderates and a few more clouds roll in.

**KEEP A VARIETY OF BAITS ON DECK:** Topwaters are one of your best bets for fall fishing, because you can cover lots of water and quickly locate the most aggressive fish. Along with those walkers, poppers, buzzbaits and frogs; mix in a hardy subsurface element with jerkbaits, crankbaits and swimbaits. (Tip: Feathered trebles enhance interest and often close the deal.)

**MATCH FORAGE COLOR** — Fall bass won't turn down an easy bluegill meal, and if you spot them chasing bream, your greens, browns, purples and black and blues are good soft plastic choices. However, most of this season's feasting focuses on shad, so white, gray, silver and chartreuse are the right selections.

**MIX AND MATCH** — Elite pro Aaron Martens likes throwing 3-inch swimbaits toward schoolers, but when the fish are staying outside of his reach, he'll use an oversized swimbait head, maybe a ½- to ¾-ounce, to get the long casts he needs.

**CHECK THE BASEMENT:** Elite pro John Murray points out that in deeper areas, the larger, more experienced fish may patrol beneath the surface fracas created by smaller bass schooling on bait pods. As the little guys blast through the bait with reckless abandon, they leave several wounded fish fluttering to the bottom — where they're easy pickings for ones that don't want to run upstairs.

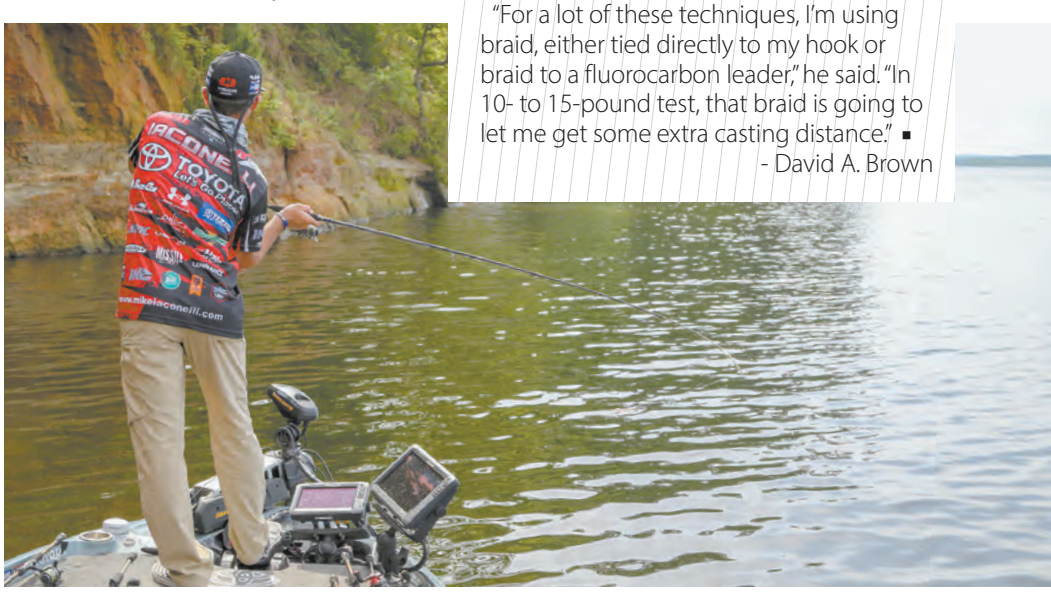
Keep an eye on where the bait schools are moving and run an underspin, a grub or a small swimbait below the forage, and you'll often pick up a nice bonus to your day.

## THE DON'TS

**STAY OFF THE FLATS:** "We fish a lot of flats, but in fall, we stay off the flats," Johnston said. "Some flats may have scattered grass, but stay in the creek channels because that's where the bait and the fish are moving."

**DON'T ASSUME BIG MEALS:** There are plenty of big baitfish to be had each fall, but sometimes bass get keyed in on tiny forage, like the shad born in the spring, which are still pretty puny by fall. No sense arguing with this OCD preference; just go with it and do what you gotta do to fit into the program.

"You want to match the hatch, so if shad are 1 ½ or 2 inches, you want to




Long casts can be difference-makers for fall fish, so make sure you're properly equipped.

## SLING 'EM FAR

Whether they're hot on the heels of fleeing baitfish or wise to your presence in clear water, fall bass can be hard to reach. That's why long casts are golden in the fourth quarter.

For un-weighted rigs like flukes or stick worms, use a heavy wire hook — and maybe a size larger — as long as it doesn't impede the bait's action. With hard baits, bumping up a hook size can get you a little more distance, but nothing benefits your casting game like strategically-selected tackle.

Bassmaster Elite pro Mike Iaconelli worked with Abu-Garcia to develop the Ike Series of spinning rods, of which, the 7-foot, 6-inch medium model was designed for reaching fall fish that don't want him too close. Calling this rod a "70-30," Iaconelli said he appreciates the dynamics of a long rod with just enough flex, which enables him to launch a fluke, a stick bait, a nail-weighted wacky (Neko rig) or a small swimbait with only an offset hook a long distance.

For maximum benefit, Iaconelli complements this rod's design with a strategic reel selection. His choice may look like overkill, but the seasoned pro knows the ends justify the means.

"I use a spinning reel that's one or two sizes bigger (than normal)," he said. "With that 7-6 long-cast rod, I use an Abu Garcia size 40 reel. A lot of anglers consider that a light saltwater reel, but I use it because I want to hold more line than a standard-size reel."

Iaconelli said braid is essential to much of his spinning rod tactics. The thin diameter drags less wind, and hitting the spool with a couple shots of Reel Snot lubricant maximizes the benefit.

"For a lot of these techniques, I'm using braid, either tied directly to my hook or braid to a fluorocarbon leader," he said. "In 10- to 15-pound test, that braid is going to let me get some extra casting distance." ■

- David A. Brown

match that size with something like a Strike King KVD 1.0 or 1.5 squarebill or a small spinnerbait like the Strike King Pond Magic," Johnston said.

"I see a lot of people throwing a ½-ounce or ¾-ounce spinnerbait and they'll have big willow leaves on there and it just doesn't look right compared to the size shad the fish are eating. A lot of times in the creeks, you can see the dead shad that the fish have killed floating. Just pick one up and take a look at the size and match your bait to it. It's better to go under in size than to go over."

**DON'T FORGET FINESSE:** Bassmaster Elite pro John Murray cut his teeth in Western fisheries before moving east of the Mississippi, so a dropshot is standard issue for much of the year. He particularly likes this finesse rig during the fall period because bass often move super shallow during the midday hours and park near stumps, logs, laydowns and dock pilings until they feel like getting after the shad parade.

During these siestas, targeted presentations like a dropshot can be deadly. But don't stop there: Murray also likes swimming a dropshot — essentially, casting toward a bait school and reeling it just above where he thinks the fish are holding. It's a presentation that allows you to show the fish a different look compared to what they're seeing a lot this time of year.

**DON'T ENCROACH:** This is not bed fishing, so keep your distance or you'll blow the game before it begins. Johnston's advice: Chose your spots wisely, so you allow yourself maximum opportunities with minimal risk.

"I'll use my Minn Kota Talons and anchor the boat so I can fish two bends of the creek," he said. "You don't want to get up there and spook the fish, so anchor up and make long casts.

"Make sure you fish your way into the creek, because the water can get really clear back in the creeks and if you get up on top of the fish, they will scatter." ▪

*A full-time freelance writer specializing in sport fishing,* **David A. Brown** *splits his time between journalism and marketing communications (www.tightwords.com).*

Don't assume that fall bass only target big meals. In truth, your dropshots and other finesse baits can prove very productive.

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# FAT BOYS ... MEAN FAT SPECKS

Photo: Kyle Jon Johnson

This Lone Star State lure isn't as popular with Louisiana anglers as it is along the Texas coast, but that certainly doesn't mean you can't use it here this fall to catch some hammer trout.

By Chris Bush

There is nothing more magical than fall settling in across the Louisiana Delta. Seemingly out of nowhere, cooler air finally filters down — and that oppressive summer heat and humidity fade like a distant memory.

For coastal anglers, one of the biggest enjoyments of the season is exceptional fishing. Sparked by dipping water temps, redfish and speckled trout begin their migration back into interior bays to prep for Ol' Man Winter. Fortunately for us, this makes them easy to target and easy to catch.

Unfortunately, their easy accessibility crowds the waterways with anyone who owns a boat and a fishing license.

But one way to bypass the crowds and still enjoy incredible fishing is to target bigger speckled trout with a legendary Texas-born bait — the Paul Brown Fat Boy.

>

Now mass-produced by MirrOlure, this line of baits is well known by many inshore anglers just west of the Sportsman's Paradise. A bulky, clumsy looking lure — seemingly better-suited for generations gone by — just stares into your soul with its overly obtrusive painted eyes and dares you to throw it.

That's pretty much been the case since the 70s when the lure was produced by accident in Mr. Brown's garage. At the time, he was trying to make a soft-bodied topwater bait, and as it turns out, a mullet profile sinking slowly through the hyper-saline waters of the Laguna Madre turned out to be a pretty good mistake.

For decades, big speckled trout fell for the big eye of the Fat Boy, and it still produces to this day. Not only has this lure graced the fishing rods of many Texas Legends, but it has twice claimed the state record before being eventually broken by Carl Rowland in 2002 when he landed a 15.6-pound giant in the Lower Laguna Madre.

So how does any of this relate to a Louisiana inshore fisherman? As previously mentioned, our bays can get awfully crowded during the fall months, and fishing pressure can be a real concern. Boats, loaded with anglers, often lump together and typically work on schooling fish. Although that can be productive, it sometimes has an adverse effect on the bite, or reduces the quality of the fish once the bite picks up.

Fishing with a Fat Boy, however, can help you with both issues.

## WHERE AND WHY

Bigger speckled trout at some point in their lifespan disassociate with being a school (smaller) fish. That means in Louisiana waterways, they often find suitable habitat away from another key factor — crowds. Productive bay systems, which hold plenty of smaller trout, typically also have bigger specks present — just not traveling with the school.

Shell banks or submerged grass ledges with a nearby tide source are optimal locations to target bigger trout. Water in depths from 2 to 4 feet are also ideal for two reasons.

The first is the with cooler water temps, bigger trout will get shallower to chase mullet, sometimes into heavier cover. Second, that's the perfect depth for this type of suspending twitchbait application.

The design of the bait allows an angler to target a certain part of the water column. In the fall, an accelerated cadence (walk-the-dog style) works above most submerged vegetation, and still takes advantage of a speck's aggressive demeanor.

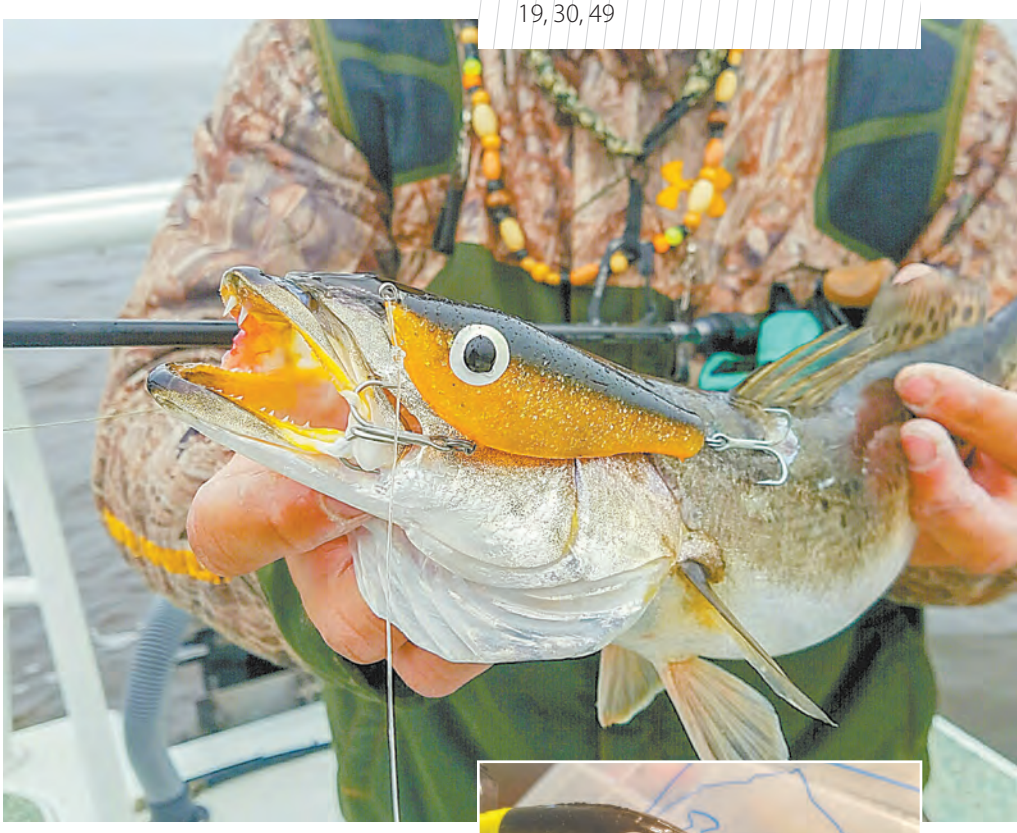
## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CADENCE

In the fall, the best cadence (retrieve tempo) should mimic a topwater walk-the-dog technique, with a pause every three to six twitches. How to best achieve this is by keeping an elevated rod tip, typically between 1 and 2 o'clock, while giving short, quick snaps of the tip. The bait is designed to dart side-to-side, and by keeping the rod up, it will do so just below the surface. While pausing the bait, visualize where it's at in the water column. Fat Boys have a subtle wobbly descent, and their fall rate may vary

continued >

### FAT BOY SET-UP SUGGESTIONS

- ROD: Laguna Light Texas Wader II
- Power: Medium
- Action: Fast
- Length: 6 feet, 5 inches
- Line Weight: 8-14 pounds
- Lure Weight: 1/8 – 1/2 ounce
- Line: Suffix 832 Braid 20-pound test/6-pound diameter
- Leader: Seguar Red Label 20-pound fluorocarbon
- Suggested Corky Fat Boys colors for Louisiana: 01, 05, 07, 09, 11, 15, 18, 19, 30, 49



ABOVE: The Fat Boy's larger profile deters school-sized trout from attacking, so you're automatically targeting larger fish with the lure. INSET: A non-slip loop knot allows a Fat Boy to move freely, capitalizing on its wobbly descent that drives specks crazy.

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based on salinity, but in Louisiana waters you can expect about 1 foot of fall every two seconds. Knowing this, along with your cadence and the depth your fishing, can lead to that legendary Corky "thump." Trust me, once you feel it, you'll never go back.

## BIGGER BAIT, BIGGER FISH

There's an old angling adage that says "Bigger baits catch bigger fish," and although it's not entirely true, enough literature and experience proves that it really can be pretty effective. The Paul Brown Fat Boy is not the largest bait out there at 3 ½ inches and ⅞ of an ounce, but it definitely does present a large profile in the water.

And its teardrop shape from front to back replicates the majority of finfish profiles big speckled trout love to hate. In addition to the profile, it has unmatched action on the descent.

The slow horizontal fall displaces enough water to create a 'wobble' when the bait is paused — which is irresistible to bigger fish. Additionally, its profile deters school-sized trout from tangling with it.

In Louisiana waters, a good rule of thumb is to expect about 1 foot of fall every two seconds when working a Fat Boy.

By that fact alone, you are now targeting trout whose diet has shifted mainly to finfish — which means many of the specks you catch will be hovering around that 20-inch mark.

## EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT

Keep in mind that fishing for bigger trout can be a challenge. Simply put, they just aren't as abundant, but they can be targeted with greater consistency. Throwing big plugs for bigger bites won't exactly fill the cooler in record time, so don't expect that. But it can provide exceptional action, especially in the fall.

Still, shifting your mindset and embracing that a limit doesn't necessarily validate success is half the battle. By breaking away from the crowd and fishing for bigger bites, you'll likely find very few coastal anglers following suit. This means that areas that are productive will continue to be productive, despite fishing pressure, which lends itself to greater consistency in the coming months.

So as fall winds arrive this year, consider changing your angling approach. Put down the popping corks, tie a few loop knots on some Fat Boys and break free from the crowd. I assure you this Texas-rooted technique works just fine in South Louisiana waters. ▪

You may not fill the cooler targeting bigger specks with a Fat Boy this fall, but you'll likely avoid the crowds and find relatively unpressured fish.

**Chris Bush** *is an Air Force officer, and a licensed charter captain, husband and father. He spends his time targeting big speckled trout and sharing knowledge on his website, Speckled Truth.*

Except for Big Lake, the state's flounder fishery — according to anglers, anyway — isn't what it once was. But there's still hope for a solid recovery.

# DOORMATS IN DECLINE?

By Chris Ginn

If Jim Morrision thought people were strange, I wonder what he thought about flounder.

In fact, I would argue that his eternal ballad about loners, misfits and outsiders would make just as much sense if the word 'people' was replaced with 'flounder.'

There's no doubt that in waters full of oddities like tripletail, needlefish and gafftops, flounder are definitely the super freaks of the surf.

I mean we're talking about a fish that has one eye that moves to the other side of its face, and that changes its color to match whatever mud bottom it's lying on while waiting for unsuspecting prey to get too close.

But as freaky as they are, we love to catch them — whether on purpose or incidentally.

And there is typically no better time to come face to face with flounder than when their fall run begins in October as they stage in lower bays and along barrier islands before heading outside to spawn.

At least that's what's supposed to happen. But lately — not so much.

**FADING FLOUNDER?**
UP NEXT >

>

## FADING FLOUNDER?

You don't have to spend very long perusing internet message boards to come across folks lamenting the seeming decline of flounder over the last few years.

"The last good flounder video we made was back in 2011," said Chas Champagne with Matrix Shad, in reference to his Dockside TV YouTube channel (https://youtu.be/GWIEDRd2Hp0). "We have not had a good flounder run on the Trestles at Lake Pontchartrain since then. Even during October and November, we considered ourselves lucky the last few years to catch two in a day."

Champagne knows firsthand that there aren't as many flounder around Lake Pontchartrain, but he has also talked with anglers from Venice to Delacroix to Bay St. Louis, who have told him they just aren't catching as many flounder either.

Cade Thomas with Runaway Charters in Venice agreed with Champagne's assessment.

"We're not doing much on flounder," he said. "Really haven't in the last three years. We used to catch 20 or 30, but now it's maybe five or six. It's definitely fallen off a lot."

Thomas pointed out the spot where he and I slammed the flounder a few years back just inside the first spillway, noting it wasn't nearly as much of a guarantee as it used to be.

"The last four or five trips we've caught a couple while targeting redfish," he said. "But we used to catch our limit in that first spillway. Now if we catch eight or 10 that's pretty good. Definitely not like it used to be."

The lack of an awesome fall flounder bite has even appeared in other typical hotspots like inside Pointe-aux-Chenes.

"Even that spot where you and Ty Hibbs smoked them by the weir a few years ago for a flounder story has been like a flounder ghost town here lately," Champagne said.

"The only place I know where people are still consistently catching flounder is Calcasieu Lake."

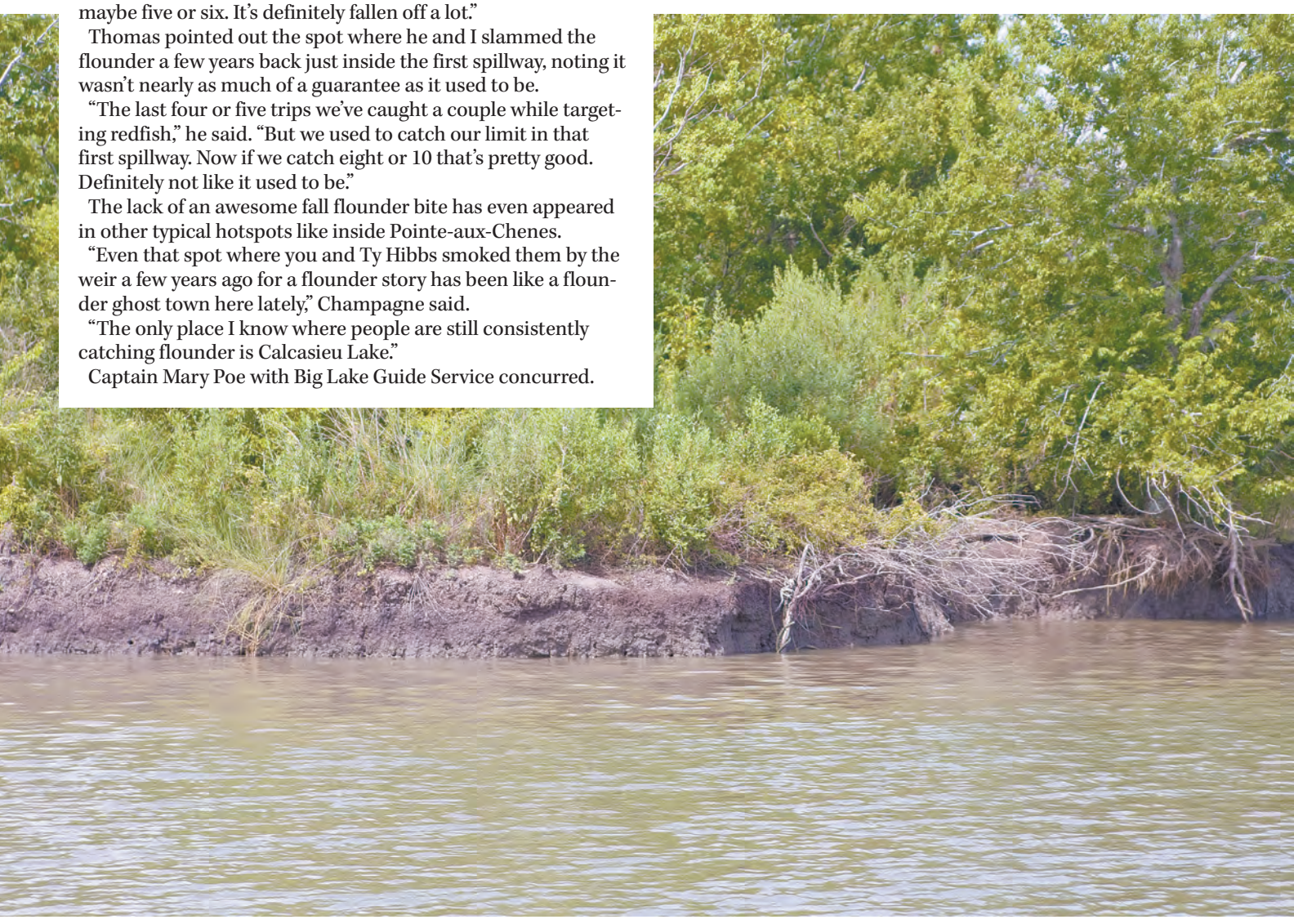
Captain Mary Poe with Big Lake Guide Service concurred.

"Our spring run this year wasn't normal because it rained over here like nobody's business, so we had a lot of fresh water," she said. "We still caught quite a few, though. Now last fall we waylaid them. Our fall run is usually the middle of October to the beginning of December, depending on the cold fronts. We've got a couple guides that strictly target flounder during the runs, and they were easily coming back with their 10-fish limits last fall."

So what gives? Why have flounder seemingly disappeared in one part of the state while continuing to flourish in another?

At this point it would be easy to cast aspersions and point fingers at variables that we might already be mad at to begin with. Blaming them on the declining flounder fishing in Southeast Louisiana might make us feel good, but it doesn't provide any real answers.

**FLOUNDER FACTS** UP NEXT >



A mud bank like this sets up perfectly as a spot where flounder can ambush their prey.

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## FLOUNDER FACTS

Jerald Horst, a retired LSU fisheries biologist and frequent *Louisiana Sportsman* contributor, wasn't sure he had an answer, but he did have some facts — facts that might even give hope that flounder fishing could improve just as quickly as it declined.

"Flounder are cool fish because they are offshore spawners, unlike trout and reds which spawn along the coast," Horst said. "Flounder spawn in December and January, which is why the traditional great months to fish them are October and November. The reason is that's when fish are staging as they move out to spawn."

Experienced anglers know that fantastic fall flounder bite will last up until the first significant cold front — one that is enhanced by a big tidal range — which will flush the fish out almost overnight. Once that front hits — boom, they're gone.

"The fish you're catching in the fall are females and young males," Horst explained. "Once they spawn, they separate by gender, and the males forever stay outside on the beaches. The females come back inshore after spawning, but it's not a sudden flushing in reverse. What we get is a trickle back in during March and April."

Horst also talked about recruitment, which measures how successfully a spawn adds harvest-sized fish back into a fishery — not how many fish total were hatched.

In other words, you can have a very successful spawn, but a weather event might kill them between the time they're 1-inch and big enough to catch. These fish weren't ever actually recruited into the fishery, even though every egg might have hatched.

The thing with flounder, he said, is they have a highly variable recruitment based on no particular outside factor.

## HOOKING UP

Hooking flounder can be a bit of a challenge.

Capt. Jeff Poe with Big Lake Guide Service feels like anglers miss a lot of flounder bites because the fish's mouths are made for grabbing and holding.

"That means your bait sometimes won't even move in their mouths when you set the hook," he said. "I've landed some flounder that weren't even hooked. They were just holding on to the lure."

That's why Poe tends to fish with a stiffer rod than he normally would when he's specifically targeting flounder. In general, he's looking for something with a stiff enough backbone to move the hook in their mouths.

Of course you've got to feel the bite before you can hook them — and even that can be a challenge.

If they're not really aggressive and hammering your baits, they bite in such a way that all you'll really notice is a heavy or slack sensation. This mainly happens when they pick up your bait and swim right at the boat.

It'll feel like you're dragging a wet rag through the water. The trick is to set the hook any time you feel something just a little bit different. ▪

— Chris Ginn

Jeff Poe likes to use a stiffer rod than normal when flounder fishing to drive his hook more consistently through their bony mouths.

October is usually one of the best months for flounder, but that hasn't been the case lately as fewer flounder have been showing up in daily catches.

"It's just the nature of the fish," Horst said. "Flounder recruitment is incredibly sporadic. Just picking a number, we might have some years that are 100 times more successful than the year before. Then it bottoms out the very next year. It's almost unbelievable the huge spikes and big dips we get."

Horst explained that if you get several consecutive years of dips, you don't see fish like you used to. But that doesn't mean you need to run out and declare them endangered. They've been around millions of years with these same highly variable recruitments.

But why is Calcasieu Lake continuing to have good flounder when the rest of the state is off?

According to Horst, the fact that every flounder there has to move out to spawn and then come back in through the ship channel means more concentrated numbers of flounder in a confined spot — even if the overall numbers might be down.

"What you're looking at over there is a 20-foot wide band on either side of the ship channel that every fish in that system has to move through," he said. "How many places can they leak out in Barataria Bay… you can't intercept them as well there."

In layman's terms, variations in recruitment around Calcasieu Lake might be less noticeable because of the choke-point effect of the ship channel. So even if fewer flounder are moving through there, the fact that they all eventually have to stack up on one another can make for some great fishing.

**FLOUNDER FISHING** UP NEXT >

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# FLOUNDER FISHING

"Hopefully they'll bounce back this fall," Champagne said. "When they're on, I'd consider The Trestles one of the elite flounder fisheries in the entire country. It seems like they always favor the west side of The Trestles for some reason, but that's not written in stone."

On a falling tide, flounder will pull up closer to the pilings on the west side, but during an incoming or dead tide, they could be 30 yards off in no-man's land.

"If you're on The Trestles, I'd highly recommend you fish out your cast all the way back to your boat," Champagne said. "That way you'll make sure you get a bait in front of them whether they're on the pilings, or under your boat."

Although flounder can be caught on artificial lures like spinners and soft plastics, tipping a jig with a piece of shrimp or a strip cut off a flounder belly can go a long way toward putting more fish in the boat. Smelly baits like the Berkley Gulp can also work well all by themselves.

As for the best flounder bite in the state right now at Calcasieu Lake, one of the keys to finding them is to idle along the ship channel looking for baitfish activity on the surface near the shoreline. Whenever you spot some, stop and make a few casts.

Many of the flounder caught in the ship channel come from 1 foot of water or less, but the larger, more elusive flounder are most often found a little bit deeper just out from the visible mud banks.

Any soft baits like Berkley Gulp with a little scent built in seem to trigger more flounder bites.

So the flounder freak show may have slowed down in some spots the last few years, but with any luck the last spawn might have been one of the ones Horst mentioned that was 100 times better than in previous years.

Until we know for sure, flounder probably won't be more than an incidental catch that comes mainly while you're fishing shrimp on the bottom for redfish.

Hopefully they'll show up in better numbers, though. It sure would make a 'Cajun Slam' a whole lot easier to accomplish. ▪

**Chris Ginn** *has been covering hunting and fishing in Louisiana since 1998. He lives with his wife Jennifer and children Matthew and Rebecca along the Bogue Chitto River in rural Washington Parish. His blog can be found at chrisginn.com.*

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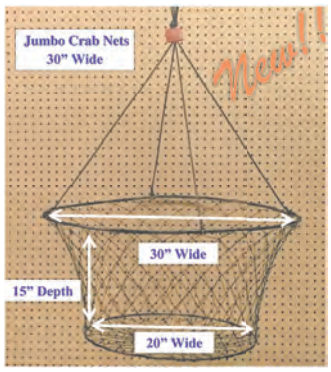
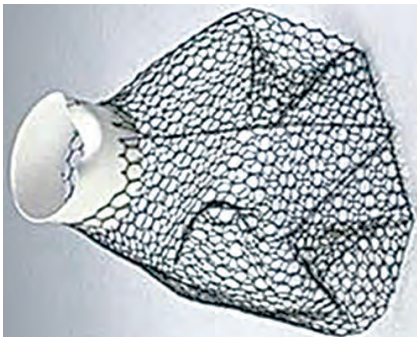
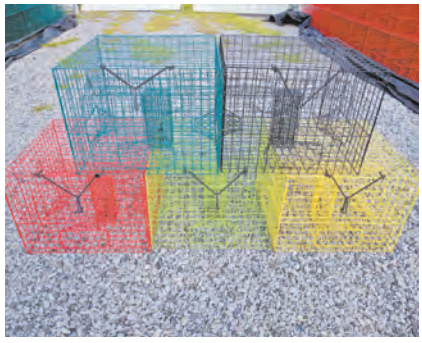



## Crawfish Pyramid Trap

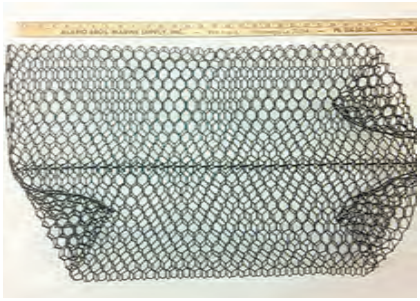


## Crab Traps



## Trawls

## Crawfish Pillow Traps



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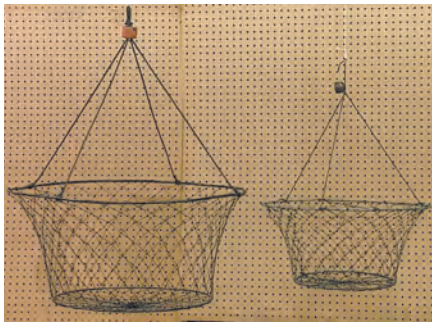
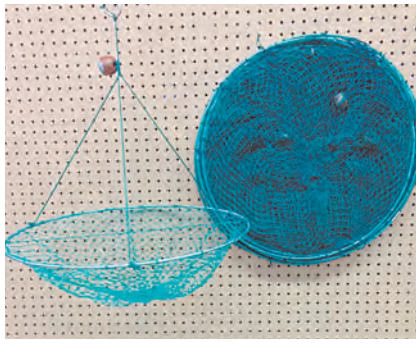
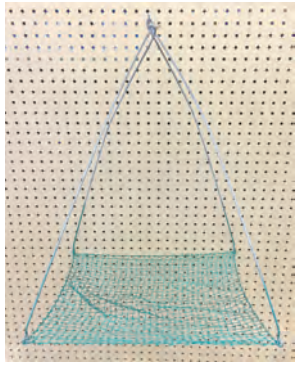


## Crawfish Nets

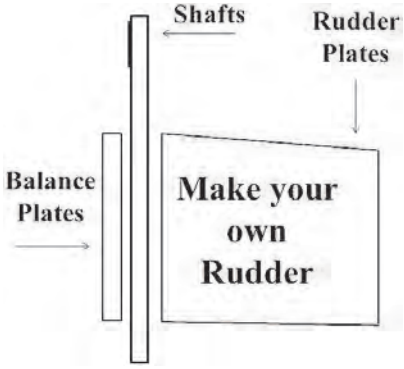


## Shafts

## Crawfish Set Nets



## Rudders

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# PITCH BLACK CATS

Nighttime is the right time for catfish — and this jugline specialist shares his tips from False River.

By Jerald Horst

It was black on the water. Of course, it was midnight.

We sat as quiet as death in Sidney Haynes' 17-foot aluminum SeaArk boat. In the distance, automobile headlights flitted busily through New Roads, perched hard on the shores of False River, the big oxbow lake of Pointe Coupee Parish.

Where were all the people going? What were they thinking? Could they know we were peeping at them from the lake's darkness?

Haynes' lighter sparked.

As he took a hard drag on his cigarette, I could see the outlines of his craggy outdoorsman's face. His younger partner and brother-in-law, 43-year-old Christopher Guillaume, followed his lead and lit one of his own.

After a few minutes of silence, Haynes softly spoke, "I guess it's getting time to go check the juglines."

We were hunting catfish, Haynes' specialty — and nighttime is the right time for catfish.

We met several hours before dark at the boat launch in Ventress. The pair wanted to work the canals in that end of the lake to catch more bream for cut bait. Both were using spincast reels to flip small earthworm-baited hooks under corks to the shallows near the canal's banks.

Guillaume was a fishing machine, flipping bream after bream in the boat. "He's really catching 'em," observed Haynes lackadaisically. "That's OK. My time is coming after dark when I put my jugs out."

The plan was to set the juglines out right at dusk. After they went out, they would anchor near the jugs and fish rods and reels tight-lined on the bottom for more catfish while the jugs worked.

Bait for the juglines would be cut shad cast-netted from City Park Lake in Baton Rouge and hook-caught bream, what they called "perch."

Haynes cautioned, "You can't legally use a cast net for perch. You have to catch them on hooks." Like the shad, the perch were cut into bait-sized pieces and stored on ice.

Bait for the rods and reels would be bait shop-purchased Canadian nightcrawlers, commonly called "cold worms."

As the sun neared setting, Haynes began to tense. He was ready.

**THE SET-UP** UP NEXT >

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## THE SET-UP

Guillaume idled the boat out of the canal and into the lake, where watching the depth sounder, he moved back and forth across the lake planning the layout in 5 to 7 feet of water. The two ends of the ribbon-shaped lake have an expanse of relatively shallow water, locally called "the flats," and the preferred place to set their juglines.

He bumped the boat in and out of gear while Haynes unwrapped and baited each line with the pre-cut bait. They placed them 50 to 60 feet apart in an arching line. "You want enough space between them to be able to run the boat around each one without tangling up," he explained.

By 8 p.m., all 39 lines were all out. Guillaume idled to near the middle of the line of floats, where Haynes dropped the anchor and picked up a big DeWalt spotlight. "I can just turn the light on the jugs and they will light up like Christmas lights."

Haynes settled into a seat and took a smoke break. The younger man didn't take a break. He quickly baited three rods and reels with cold worms and chunked them out, propping each one up within a hand's reach.

Haynes laughed. "He normally fishes with three. When all three get to bouncing, he'll go psycho."

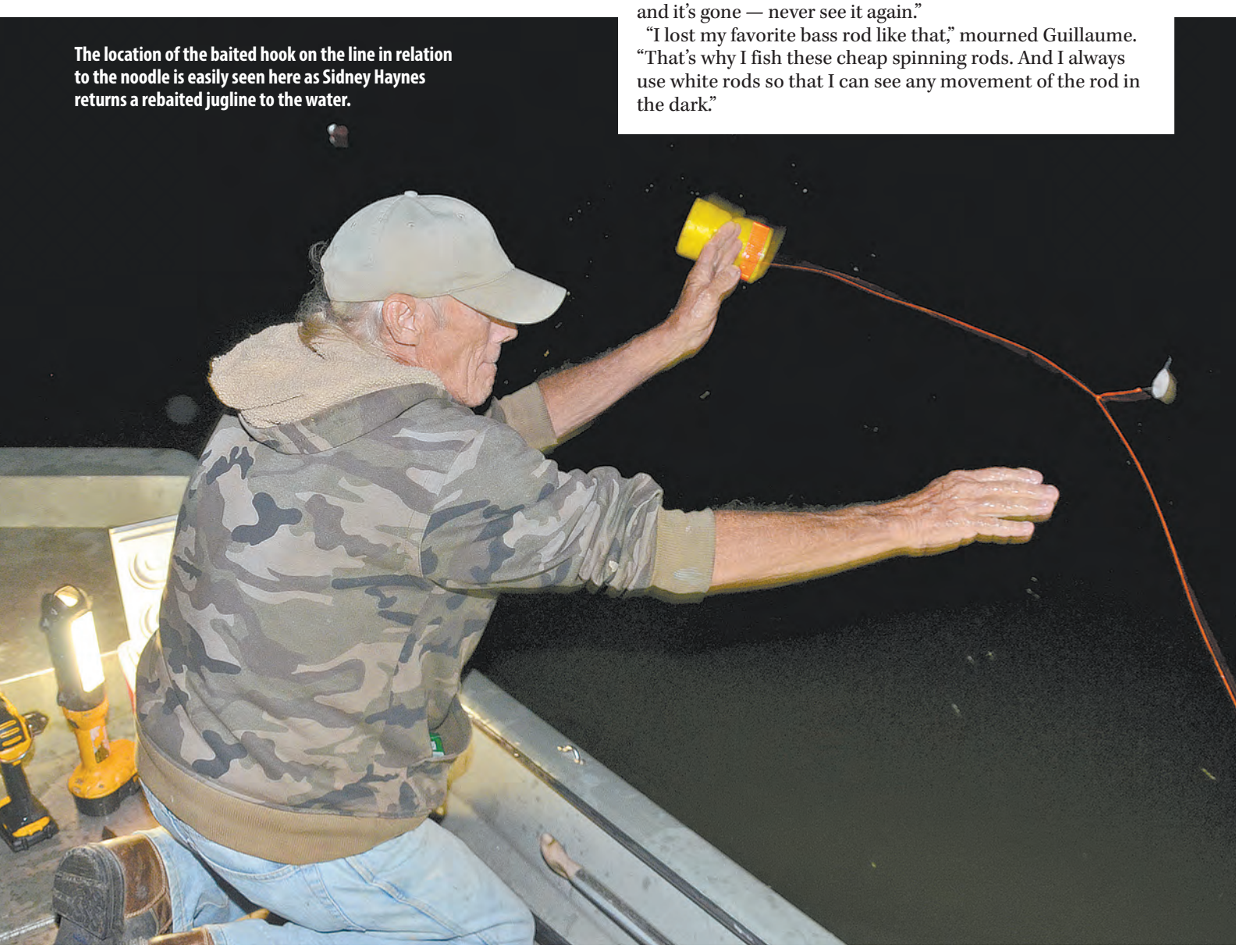
Haynes finally baited one rod, also with worms. "In about an hour, we'll go down the line and check them. Sometimes they won't move the jug until the boat gets close."

## THE CATCHING

At 8:16 p.m., Guillaume drew first blood with a 1 ½ pound channel cat. From then on, he kept busy setting hooks, reeling in fish, rebaiting and casting.

"We've lost many a rod like this," said Haynes, referring to the multiple baited rods out at one time. "A big fish just takes it and it's gone — never see it again."

"I lost my favorite bass rod like that," mourned Guillaume. "That's why I fish these cheap spinning rods. And I always use white rods so that I can see any movement of the rod in the dark."



**The location of the baited hook on the line in relation to the noodle is easily seen here as Sidney Haynes returns a rebaited jugline to the water.**

Catfish hooked on the jug-lines were fresh and lively, offering a lot of fight.

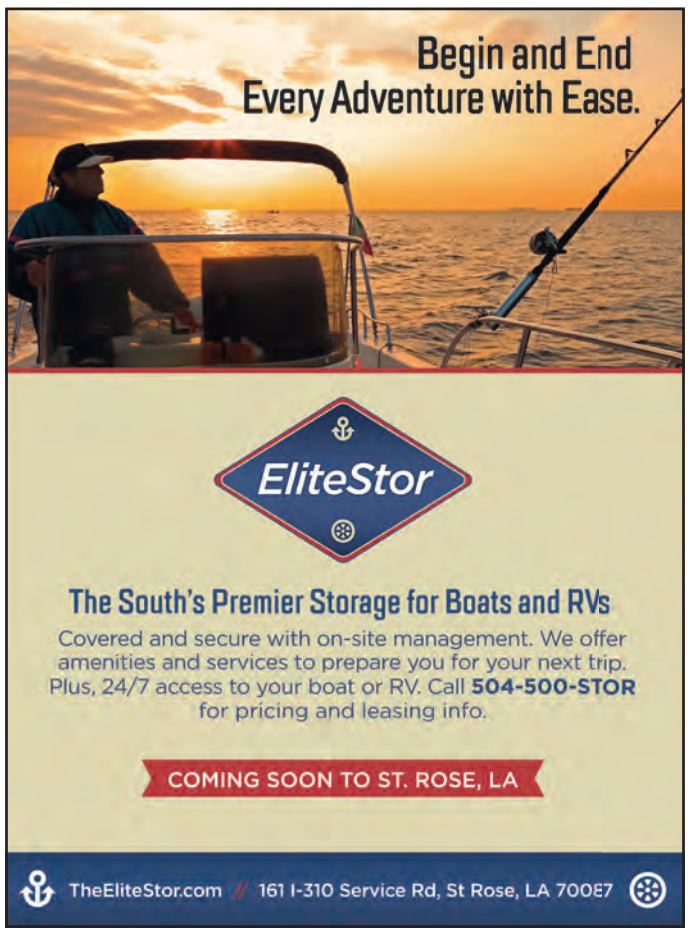
A little after 9 p.m., Guillaume verbally nudged Haynes. "Let's go check 'em." They swapped places, with the younger man moving from the bow, where he fished, to the controls and Haynes taking his place on the bow holding the spotlight.

As they slowly passed each jug, Haynes picked it up just far enough to check for bait. About a third of them were missing bait and needed rebaiting. Hooked fish were dropped into an ice chest.

Guillaume chugged past the end of the line, anchored in 7 feet of water and immediately got his lines back into the water. "It's still early," he mumbled. "It's only 10 p.m."

They repeated the routine every hour or so. Between runs Guillaume tended his rods closely, constantly turning the reel handles to keep the lines tight enough to see the least nibble.

**TALES OF THE DARK** UP NEXT >



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## TALES OF THE DARK

The fishing pace the pair kept left lots of time for talking and Haynes didn't disappoint, regaling Guillaume with tales of his many years on the water and in the woods.

He opened with bigfoot. He called them "skunk apes," and claimed to have had two encounters with the creatures. "One in Sherburne (now a wildlife management area) tore up the woods all around us in the dark.

"The other one was in Greensburg. I got four witnesses to that one — and they are alive to this very day.

"I even went bigfoot hunting in Arkansas."

Sherburne, where he killed a 270-pound, 11-point deer the previous year, is one of his favorite spots in the state. "It's the only place you can see old growth timber in Louisiana. A chain saw has never touched the trees."

The bigfoot discussion led to bears. "I had a bear try to get in the car with me once. I was sleeping in a '56 Buick and we had our groceries in the car. They got brown bears there.

"But black bears are more dangerous. They kill more people than all the other bears combined."

Guillaume nodded his head knowingly.

"I got bit by an alligator last year," Haynes went on. "I stepped on him in a foot of water and he came up out of the water and closed on my arm. I had to go to the doctor for a tetanus shot.

"I blew him up though and we fried him — pretty tasty."

There was more.

## TIP OF THE DAY

Christopher Guillaume, a master at catching catfish on rods and reels, uses a most unorthodox way of baiting his hook. After threading the worm the length of the hook, he pushes the entire segment of worm up the line immediately above the hook.

"People give me a hard time about that," he laughed.

"I don't," retorted Haynes. "It works. It's crazy — but it works."

The proof was in the pudding. Both men were using the same 2/0 hooks, but rod-for-rod, Guillaume was vastly out-catching Haynes.

In spite of Guillaume racking up the fish without Haynes even getting a bite, the older man kept fishing one rod baited with the worm on the hook the traditional way.

"I just like being out here; it's relaxing," was his justification.

Part of the truth, too, is that Haynes is a dedicated jugline man.

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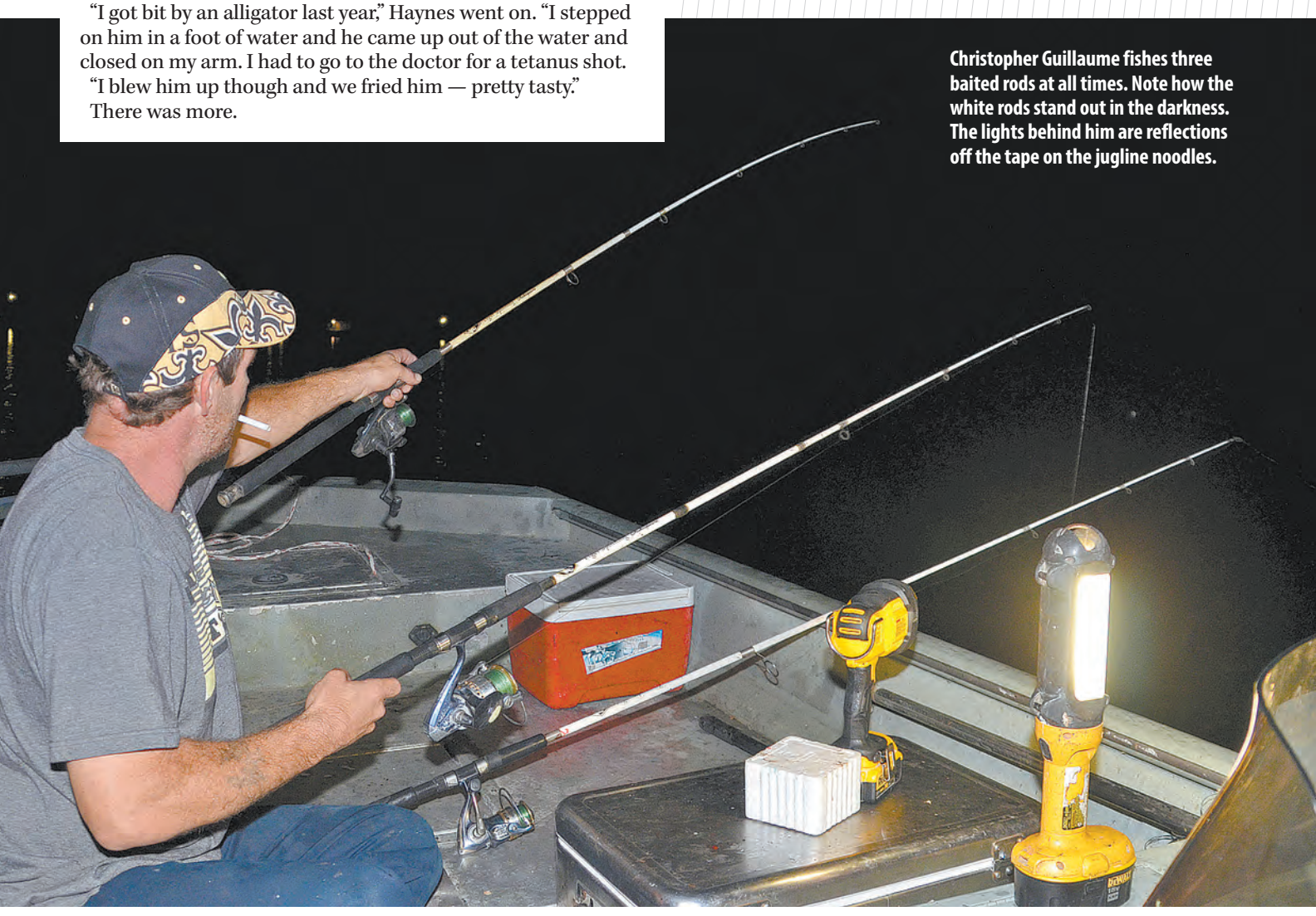

**Christopher Guillaume fishes three baited rods at all times. Note how the white rods stand out in the darkness. The lights behind him are reflections off the tape on the jugline noodles.**

Guillaume catches more catfish with his worm pushed up the line above the hook rather than on the hook itself.

"I had pictures of an ivory-billed woodpecker that I took in Maurepas. I lost the pictures in the flood (the great Livingston Parish flood of 2016, which hit virtually every home in the parish).

"They say they are gone, but they're not. Just because they say they are gone doesn't mean they are. They don't know everything. They (the ivory bills) look a lot different than the pleaty-headed woodpeckers."

Of course, snakes were fair game for tale-telling as well. "I been bit twice by cottonmouths. The first time was my fault. I was trying to grab it.

"I still try to grab them. I don't back off. I charge at them and deal with it. I swing them around over my head and pop them like a whip. It separates their vertebrae."

Guillaume watched his rods warily and jumped like a cat on any that wiggled. He was doing the catching and Haynes was doing the tale-spinning.

After Guillaume reeled in his umpteenth fish, Haynes cackled delightedly, "It's got to be the way he puts his worm on the hook.

"But I ain't gonna change. That's the way I was taught to do it."

**FINISHING THE NIGHT** UP NEXT >

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## FINISHING THE NIGHT

The most fish came on rods and reels, but the biggest definitely came on the jug lines with cut bait. By 3 a.m., the twinkling of headlights on the shores slowed dramatically as people retired. Off in the distance, a train wailed mournfully.

Guillaume reeled his lines in and called Haynes to take his place on the bow. "Here. I catch fish; you harvest them."

"I can't deny it," growled Haynes delightedly. Juglines were definitely his game.

At the end of the run, Guillaume stopped the boat near the middle of a line. "Are we too close," he queried Haynes.

"Nah," he chuckled. "Catfish don't have much brains. They just smell something, swim to it and eat it."

By 4 a.m., I was so groggy, I was punch drunk, but Haynes was alert and Guillaume was energetic.

Right before daylight, the catching almost became monotonous. Guillaume swung one cat after another over the gunnel.

Finally, I cried uncle.

"I usually don't quit until I run out of bait," said Guillaume, a little sheepishly.

They motored me to the landing where my truck was waiting, then turned the boat around, waved and headed back out.

The drive home was hell. ▪

**Jerald Horst** *is a retired Louisiana State University professor of fisheries. He is an active writer, book author and outdoorsman. Jerald may be reached at jerald@rockinghorst.com.*

Christopher Guillaume spent the whole night reeling in catfish of this size, perfect for frying.

**HAYNES' JUGLINES**

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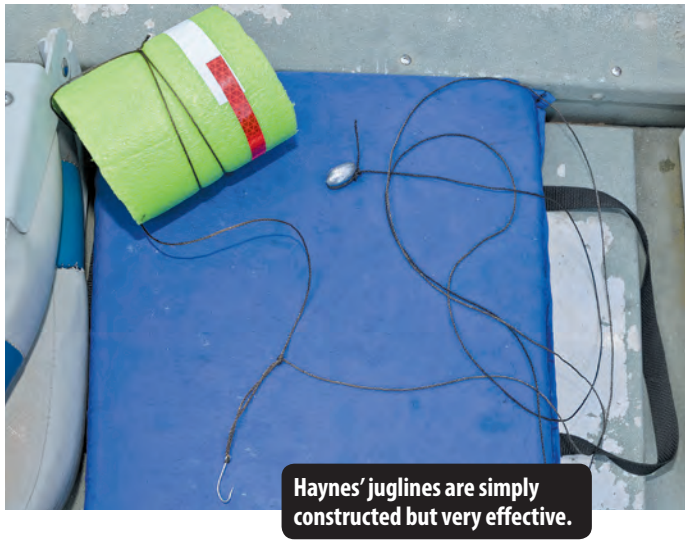
# HAYNES' JUGLINES

Sidney Haynes begins building his juglines by cutting a 6- or 7-inch section off a foam swimming pool noodle. He then cuts about a 10-foot length of twisted, tarred black nylon twine from its spool. He wraps one end around the center of the noodle section and ties it tightly.

A foot below the float, he ties off a 4-inch loop with an overhand knot. A one-ounce egg sinker is tied to the other end of the line. He slips the loop of the dropper through the eye of a 2/0 trotline hook and then slips it back over on itself.

Finally, he wraps a strip of reflective tape around the foam of each jug to make it easy to spot with a light after dark. He stressed the importance of using good tape, adding that he purchases his at farm supply stores like Tractor Supply.

The location of the hook near the float is important. Since catfish are defined as bottom fish, common sense would dictate that the hook should be near the sinker.



Haynes' juglines are simply constructed but very effective.

But at night, Haynes explained, catfish feed near the water's surface. "After dark, all the baitfish come to the top. The catfish follow them."

The 1-ounce sinkers seem ridiculously small compared to the size of the noodle, but Haynes has an explanation for that, too.

"The sinker is just to hold the line in place while it fishes. Most of the time, the fish will just swim round and round in a circle without really moving it a long distance. Where they get hooked is pretty much where they stay.

"It sounds stupid, but it's true."

He does admit that really big catfish will move the line when the boat approaches. His largest to date is an 88-pounder that he caught while fishing alone. His largest caught with Guillaume was 61 pounds.

"It took two hours to land that one. You couldn't hold the float. He just wouldn't come in. That's when the fun starts, when the cork goes under." ▪

Sidney Haynes sets his baited juglines out immediately before dark. The location of the hook near the float is clearly visible here. (Note also the snap-lid plastic container he uses to store the lines in.)

# THE HUNTER AND THE LAKE

Sixty-five year old Sidney Haynes is back at home when he is on False River. Born in New Roads, he left when he was 14 years old. Now living in Denham Springs and retired from plant construction and pipeline work, he still feels the pull of his roots.

"I was on this river as soon as I could walk on a boat. Every time over the years that I came back into town, I came back to the river. Almost always I caught catfish.

"My grandfather Leo Olinde taught me how to fish. He sold catfish and other rough fish. I went to jugs 20 years ago. Before that, I used rods and reels and trotlines.

"The average person who used juglines then used plastic bottles — oil, Crisco and two-liter bottles. But there was no place to put the hook and the weight. And they were too big — they took up too much space."

Haynes owned up to fishing two or three times a week when he's not deer hunting. He is a serious jug fisherman, fishing Bayou Pigeon, Lake Verret, Lake Palourde, the Amite River and even Toledo Bend, besides his regular runs to False River.

"I go by myself a lot now; and I go with him," he nodded toward the younger man. Christopher Guillaume, who isn't retired and still has to work, fishes with Haynes twice a month.

They both eat a lot of fish. "I make a lot of catfish burgers," said Haynes. "I bake the fish in an oven with salt, pepper and onion. Then I flake them, mix the meat with instant potato flakes and milk, and make patties.

"I brown them in a skillet with a little butter, then put them on a hamburger bun with lettuce, tomato and a cheese slice. Mmm!" ■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Jerald Horst

Atlantic spadefish are one of the most common species at offshore oil and gas platforms in the Gulf of Mexico.

# LET'S CALL A SPADE A SPADE

## REPORTS SUGGEST SPADEFISH ARE TASTY, BUT THE AUTHOR DISAGREES

Photo courtesy Chesney Lab, LUMCON

They are everywhere.

If you fish offshore at oil and gas platforms, clouds of the convict-striped fish are often visible underwater. Atlantic spadefish are a dominant species in the fish communities that develop around platforms. Research done at LSU found that 97 percent of the fish associated with a studied platform were spadefish.

Fishermen in boats are near the water's surface and often can't get a grand view of the number of spadefish around a platform. But observation from the platform's upper deck reveals hundreds of the animals under and around the structure: Schools commonly hold more than 500 fish.

With their deep body, vaguely resembling the working end of a garden spade and five or six vertical black bars set on a silver body, they are hard to mistake for anything else in saltwater except perhaps a sheepshead.

Most common in offshore waters less than 120 feet deep or so in the northern Gulf, they penetrate much closer to shore in the clearer, less freshwater-influenced waters of Florida and Texas.

Spadefish love structure and will be found over wrecks and reefs, near pilings and buoys, under bridges, in fact anywhere there isn't just bare bottom — and even there sometimes, but usually not in numbers.

Not a bottom fish, most are found in the upper 65 feet of the water column

Young, smaller fish are found in inshore estuaries, and when less than 1-inch long they are colored entirely black. Swimming at an odd angle, they most closely resemble dead, drifting leaves, providing some camouflage from predators.

## SPADEFISH GROW QUICKLY

Every spadefish starts as a fertilized egg spawned near the surface between May and September. Females spawn several times each season and produce an average of 1 million eggs.

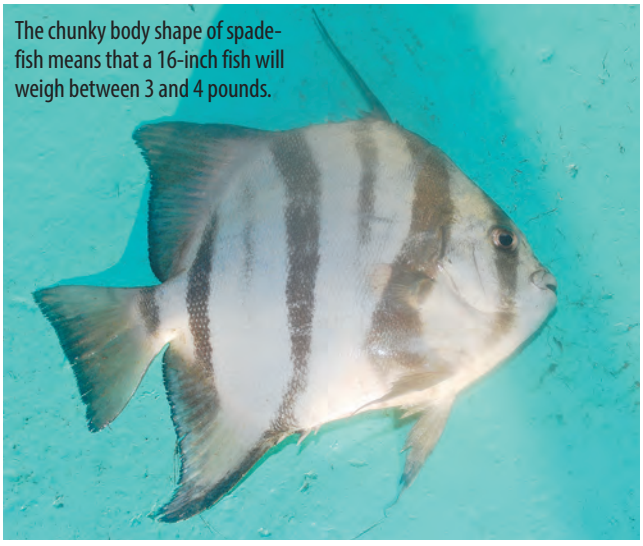
They grow quickly the first five years of their life, reaching an average of 17 inches. After that growth slows and growth rates are uneven from fish to fish, making it impossible to estimate age from size.

For example, a 20-inch spadefish can be anywhere from 5 to 14 years old. It is known that they live to be at least 19 years old. Written sources commonly state that they will grow to 20 pounds, but the IGFA world record is a 14-pound, 14-ounce fish taken from Chesapeake Bay. Both sexes mature by one year of age.

## DIET IS THE KEY TO CATCHING THEM

Spadefish have a wide diet, including sponges, segmented worms, soft corals, tunicates, algae, sea cucumbers, feather stars, sea anemones and planktonic crustaceans. Most famously, they are one of the few creatures that eat jellyfish. In fact, they seem to prefer jellyfish over most other foods.

East Coast anglers, who have fewer numbers and species of desirable fishes than do Gulf Coast anglers, very often



The chunky body shape of spadefish means that a 16-inch fish will weigh between 3 and 4 pounds.

use small jelly balls or strips cut from cannonball jellyfish as bait for the banded bandits.

Spadefish can be vigorous feeders and will swarm the post-filleting discarded carcass of a fish to strip every morsel of meat from the frame. But most of the time they are nibblers rather than strikers.

Their small brush-like teeth arranged in bands in a tiny mouth make them experts at stealing bait from a hook. The use of small hooks, or even treble hooks, is important for catching them, and the bait should cover the entire hook.

Presenting the bait by free-lining or under a cork is the best approach. Bottom fishing with lead sinkers is not productive for spadefish.

Lacking jellyfish for bait, the most commonly used spadefish bait on the Atlantic coast is clams cut into strips the size of Band-Aids. Clams are a common bait item sold in East Coast bait shops, but jellyfish aren't.

Probably the best bait that is easy to find on our coast is shrimp. Veteran spadefish anglers caution that it is important to peel the shrimp tail before burying the hook in it.

## BUT ARE THEY ANY GOOD?

Spadefish are determined fighters and give good sport, much like similarly-shaped sheepshead and freshwater bluegills, using their wide bodies for leverage.

Apparently, spadefish aren't just for sport either. Reliable reports have them being deadly live baits for catching amberjacks. Besides being relished by big AJs, they are durable and hold up well in live wells, also an important consideration.

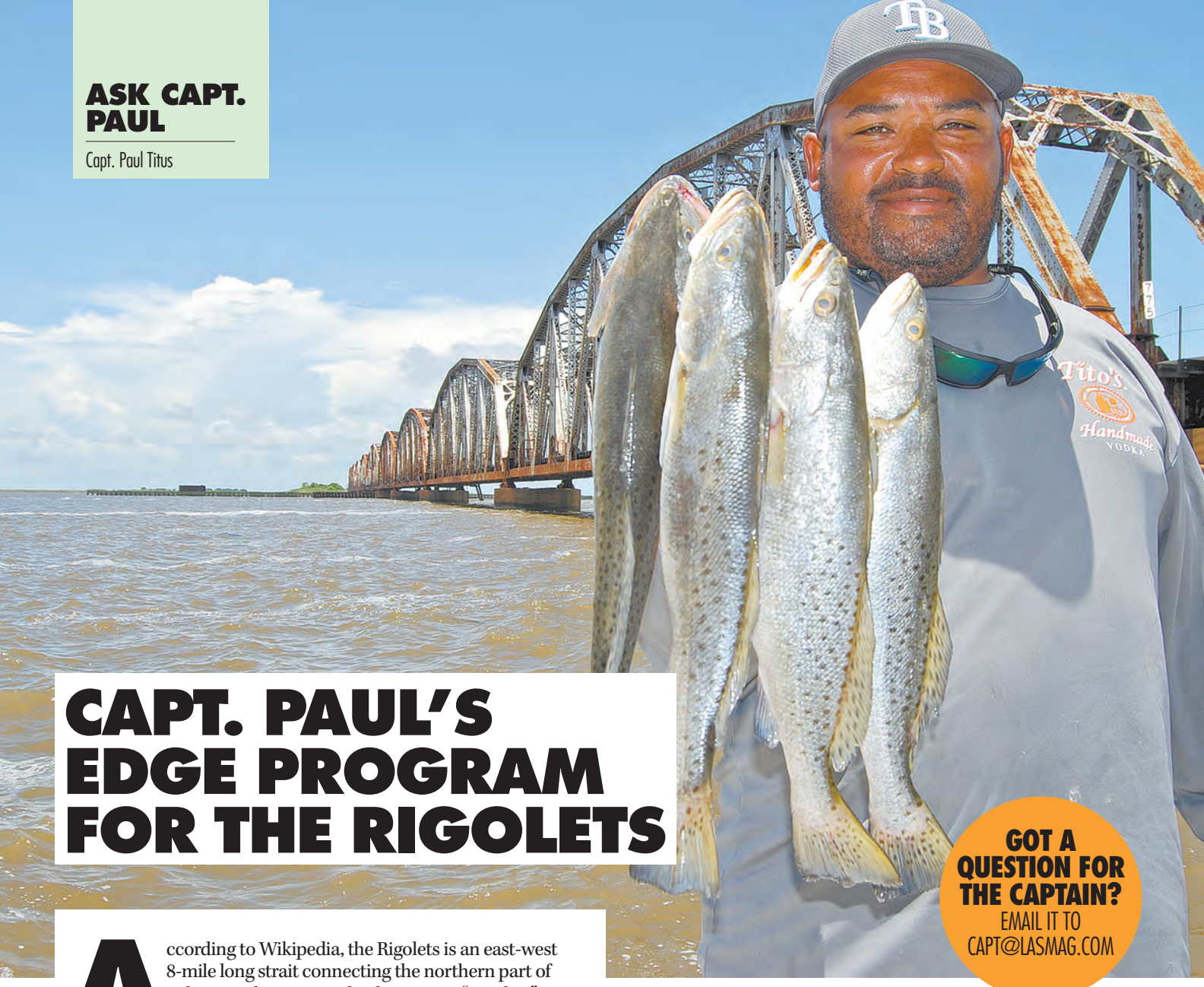
Atlantic spadefish are savored as table fare in the Caribbean, (their range extends from Massachusetts south through the Caribbean to southern Brazil) so much so that they may be considered overfished off Columbia and Martinique.

Most North American reference books report the fish as being good to excellent as a food fish. I disagree rather strongly, finding the dingy-colored flesh to be musty in taste. (Remember: I eat and enjoy hardhead catfish and gaspergou.)

Let's call a spade a spade. ▪

**Jerald Horst** *is a retired Louisiana State University professor of fisheries. He is an active writer, book author and outdoorsman. Jerald may be reached at jerald@rockinghorst.com.*

Capt. Paul Titus




# CAPT. PAUL'S EDGE PROGRAM FOR THE RIGOLETS

**GOT A QUESTION FOR THE CAPTAIN?**
EMAIL IT TO CAPT@LASMAG.COM

According to Wikipedia, the Rigolets is an east-west 8-mile long strait connecting the northern part of Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne. "Rigolets" comes from the word *rigole,* which is French for "trench" or "gutter." The name is locally pronounced "RIG-uh-leez."

But it's more than a trench, as the water in some places is nearly 100 feet deep, and at one location is about 4,600 feet wide. The entire length of this "gutter" is marked with NOAA Aids to Navigation consisting of lights, markers, buoys, cans, and nuns. It is a major artery for getting to and from Lake Pontchartrain, and the east end intersects the Intracoastal Waterway and the Mississippi Sound waterway.

This Edge features more than 180 waypoint locations, including Four Bayou shown as waypoint RG 177 at the north side of the Rigolets at 30°10.5080' N Latitude ~ 89°40.5846' W Longitude

It also contains many Lake Pontchartrain locations, such as the Old Brick Hospital Wall shown as Waypoint RG159 at 30°09.9046' W Latitude ~ 89°44.9387' W Longitude, and some around the Chef Pass shown as waypoint RG27 at 30°06.0599'N Latitude ~ 89°48.9030' W Longitude.

There are many locations in the area just east of Lake St. Catherine, such as waypoint RG 88A at Counterfeit Pass and Bayou Bay Jaune at 30°09.3162' N Latitude ~ 89°41.1007' W Longitude.

It features many locations around the ICWW, such as waypoint RG56 at Miller Bayou at the railroad bridge at 30°07.2084' N Latitude ~ 89°41.8594'W Longitude, and the hole at Unknown Pass at Lake Borgne shown as waypoint RG90 at 30°06.3572'N Latitude ~ 89°40.8194' W Longitude. And it features additional locations in the lower reaches of the West Pearl and Pearl Rivers.

I call the programs "Capt. Paul's Fishing Edge" because I believe they will give the angler an advantage in getting to, finding fishing spots, moving around, and getting back from some of the premier fishing areas in the state.

Presently, Capt. Paul's Edge is available for 21 different areas, including Barataria Bay, Lake Borgne, Hopedale to the Miss Sound, Hopedale to Bayou Terre Boeufs, Delacroix to Point a la Hache, Bayou Bienvenue, Port Sulphur, Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne, Calcasieu Lake, Pearl River WMA, Lafitte, Leeville East and Leeville West, Vermilion Bay, Empire-Buras, Myrtle Grove, Cocodrie/Dulac, Bayou Sauvage NWR, Big Branch NWR and the Rigolets, which is highlighted in this column.

Each of the Edge programs have more than 100 of my fishing and navigation waypoints, and they're written in most of the common formats needed for consumer GPS units.

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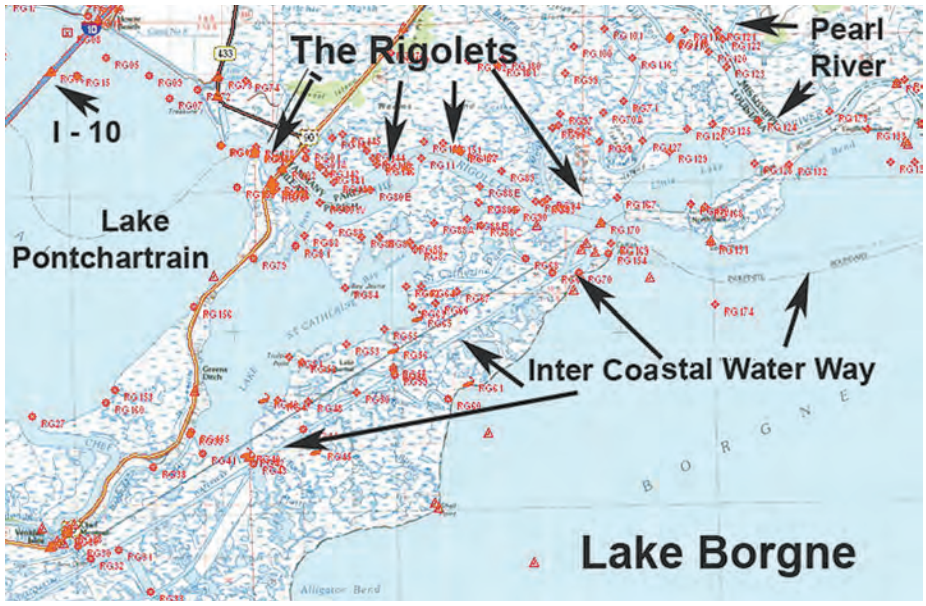


## EDGE WAYPOINTS CAN BE ELECTRONICALLY INSTALLED

Each file can be downloaded into a variety of GPS units. All of the EDGE programs are sent as an email attachment to your computer address. This data download enters all of Capt. Paul's Waypoints into the unit, and each download also features a general map of the area in 1:100,000 scale, as well as individual information on each waypoint.

These map images cannot be installed in the GPS unit, but offer a location of the waypoints and their descriptions, as well as a READ ME and INSTRUCTIONS file.

To order an Edge file, you must have an email address that accepts attachments. All of the Capt. Paul's Fishing Edge files can be found in Louisiana Sportsman' s Outdoor Store (www.sportsmangear.com).

In addition, there are several link buttons throughout LouisianaSportsman.com which will bring you to the EDGE ordering page.

Remember that you must state your brand of GPS unit, your email address and the selected area. The Edge files are NOT brand name interchangeable — so be sure to make the correct GPS selection. ▪

**Capt. Paul Titus** *has been responding to GPS questions on LouisianaSportsman.com since 2000. He has been fishing and hunting in Louisiana since 1957. Titus holds a USCG license and conducts instruction courses in the use of GPS for private individuals and government agencies.*

Redfish, be afraid.Young fly anglers like Kurt Becnel are coming — with skills already honed.

# THE HAUNT FOR REDS IN OCTOBER

## IT'S A GREAT MONTH FOR NEWBIES TO STALK THEIR FIRST POISSON ROUGE

Lately I've been enjoying the new "Jack Ryan" television series. Based on the novels by Tom Clancy, Ryan is a CIA analyst-turned-operative who is called upon to save our country from various enemies.

Several movies have been made on the Ryan novels. The first was "Hunt for Red October" in 1990, with the character played by Alec Baldwin. It was a box office smash.

Inspired by that movie name, there have been several articles over the years entitled, "The Hunt for Reds in October." Each article has pointed out that (a) targeting marsh redfish is more like hunting than fishing, and (b) October is prime time for catching reds on the Gulf Coast.

And while those points are valid, I take a different approach. Rather than just hunt reds, I *haunt* them.

How do you haunt a fish? Simple. As you release it back in the water, you whisper in its ear — or whatever ear it does have — the following: "More like me are coming."

I don't know if that gives a redfish nightmares or not — but it should.

## SCARY TIMES

One reason for the spot-tail Elvis to be nervous this month is because much of what shrouds its presence is disappearing.

As the cool fronts of October push through our marshes, they lower the flood tides of late summer. This also forces bait out of the spartina grass, and gives them a buffet to feed on. Often their aggressive feeding will give them away.

And as water temps lower, suspended organics begin to drop out. Clarity can increase in marsh ponds from a few inches to a couple feet within weeks. It definitely makes it a lot easier to spot the pumpkins.

## A HALLOWS' EVE PREP

My threat to the *poisson rouge* is not an idle one.

>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

• **Oct. 5-6 (Fri-Sat) - Southern Fly Fishing Fair**, Sheid Convention Center, ASU Campus, Mt. Home, Arkansas. Seminars, workshops, fly tying and casting demos, vendor exhibits, youth activities and more. Hosted by Fly Fishers International, Southern Council. For more info, go to www.ffisoc.org.

• **Oct. 7 (Sun) - Fly Fishing Fundamentals**, Pack & Paddle, 601 E. Pinhook, Lafayette. 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. Cost $40. Hands-on clinic covering gear, knots, flies and fly casting. Registration required as class size limited. For details, go to www.packpaddle.com.

• **Oct. 13 (Sat) – Wild Things**. Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, Lacombe. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Free admission. Hosted by Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges. Seminars, exhibits, crafts and more. Fly tying demos by the Pontchartrain Basin Fly Fishers. For details, go to friendsoflouisianawildliferefuges.org .

• **Oct. 13 (Sat) - PAC Fall Fly Classic**, PAC Kayak Rentals, Pointe-aux-Chenes. CPR format tournament, fly fishing only. Boat and kayak categories, Redfish and Mixed Bag divisions. Entry fee: $40 includes food. Benefits Mission Six charity. Website: packayakrental.com.

• **Nov. 3-4 (Fri-Sat) - Southern Rendezvous**. Annual gathering of fly tiers from Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas and elsewhere. North Toledo Bend State Park, Zwolle, La. No planned activities but lots of fly tying, food and fishing. Fee includes lodging and meals. For details, go to www.gulfcoastcouncilffi.org.

Take my nephew Kurt. A few years ago, I introduced him to the wonders of marsh fly fishing. Appropriately, on a Halloween trip.

In preparation for the trip, we practiced some casting on a nice, windy day. After all, it's never calm in the marsh — except on weekdays.

I placed several hula-hoops from 20 to 40 feet away and about 10 to 15 feet apart.

We then did an exercise called "playing the clock." From a marker representing the 12 noon position, I would bark out various clock positions relative to each hoop. For example, "3 o'clock" meant a fish 45 degrees to his right. The goal was to make the cast to the hoop with only one false cast, and not overline the hoop.

We followed with hook-setting and fish-fighting practice. This involved me pretending to be a fish, pulling on the end of his line and moving from side to side. All in an effort to keep tension constant.

## DARK SHADOWS

The day of the trip, we did a roadside launch with my canoe. Kurt took the front, while I poled from the rear.

The water was a tad murky, so I began looking for dark figures. Didn't take long until I spotted a red a few feet off a bank, cruising slowly to the right.

Our practice session paid off. Rather than cast to the fish — which was at 10 o'clock — I told him to cast at 11 o'clock. The black LaFleurs Charlie hit near the bank. I said, "Let it sit." Then we waited a few seconds until the fish was inches away.

At that point, I ordered Kurt to begin making short strips. As soon as he did, the red darted towards his fly. Kurt felt the tension, and

continues on page 122

## TIPPETS

This month, specks will be thick in the interior lakes and marshes. Look for clear water and some tidal movement. Or better yet, diving birds.

Early, late or on overcast days, fling a popper or gurgler. Otherwise, nothing takes trout like a Clouser Minnow or EP Spawning Shrimp suspended 3 feet under a VOSI (flyrodder's popping cork).

North winds will drop tide levels, giving fly anglers sight-fishing opportunities for reds and drum. Bendbacks, Charlies, Toads and Spoonflies will work best in skinny water.

Shad will be schooling in lakes. Look for bass to converge on the schools late in the afternoon. Crease flies, Clousers, and shad patterns work best.

Nearly all of the sandy streams across the state will have excellent spotted bass action this month. Try poppers or minnow patterns around fallen trees and cutbanks.

Bream activity will spurt this month before it diminishes. Go with 1/100-ounce or heavier weighted flies early, then switch to popping bugs late in the afternoon.

Stocking of rainbow trout renews this month in two tailwater rivers just north of Shreveport: Mountain Fork near Broken Bow, OK, and Little Missouri near Murfreesboro, AR. Early in the season, olive or black woolybuggers are all you need.

Sarah Giles took advantage of low tides last fall to stalk this 27-inch red. It ate a shrimp fly tied by her dad.

just as we practiced, he set the hook and battled the fish, moving the rod tip side-to-side so as to avoid slack and keep leverage on the fish's head.

Shortly, Kurt brought his shiny red prize to the net: The first red he'd ever caught on fly.

## THE GREAT PUMPKIN

Nothing brings more joy than seeing a newbie hook their first red.

I recall when another nephew of mine, Ira, made his maiden marsh fly fishing trip. We were fishing specks in a canal when a large series of crashes came from behind a cut.

I put us in position and waited. Suddenly it rose on the edge of a grass island: A big bright orange fish glowing like a pumpkin.

Ira did everything right — perfect fly placement, a good hookset and keeping proper tension during the fight. When the fish made a run, he used the reel's drag while slightly palming the reel rim.

But just as I was bringing the net, Ira broke a cardinal rule: He let the line go slack, and the great pumpkin spit the hook.

When the fish gets near the boat, it's better to swim it around than to let tension off — especially with a barbless fly.

Since then, Ira has caught numerous reds on fly rod. But that one was special. The first one always is — even if it gets away. ▪

**Glen 'Catch' Cormier** *has pursued fish on the fly for 30 years. A certified casting instructor and renowned fly tier, he and his family live in Cotile.*

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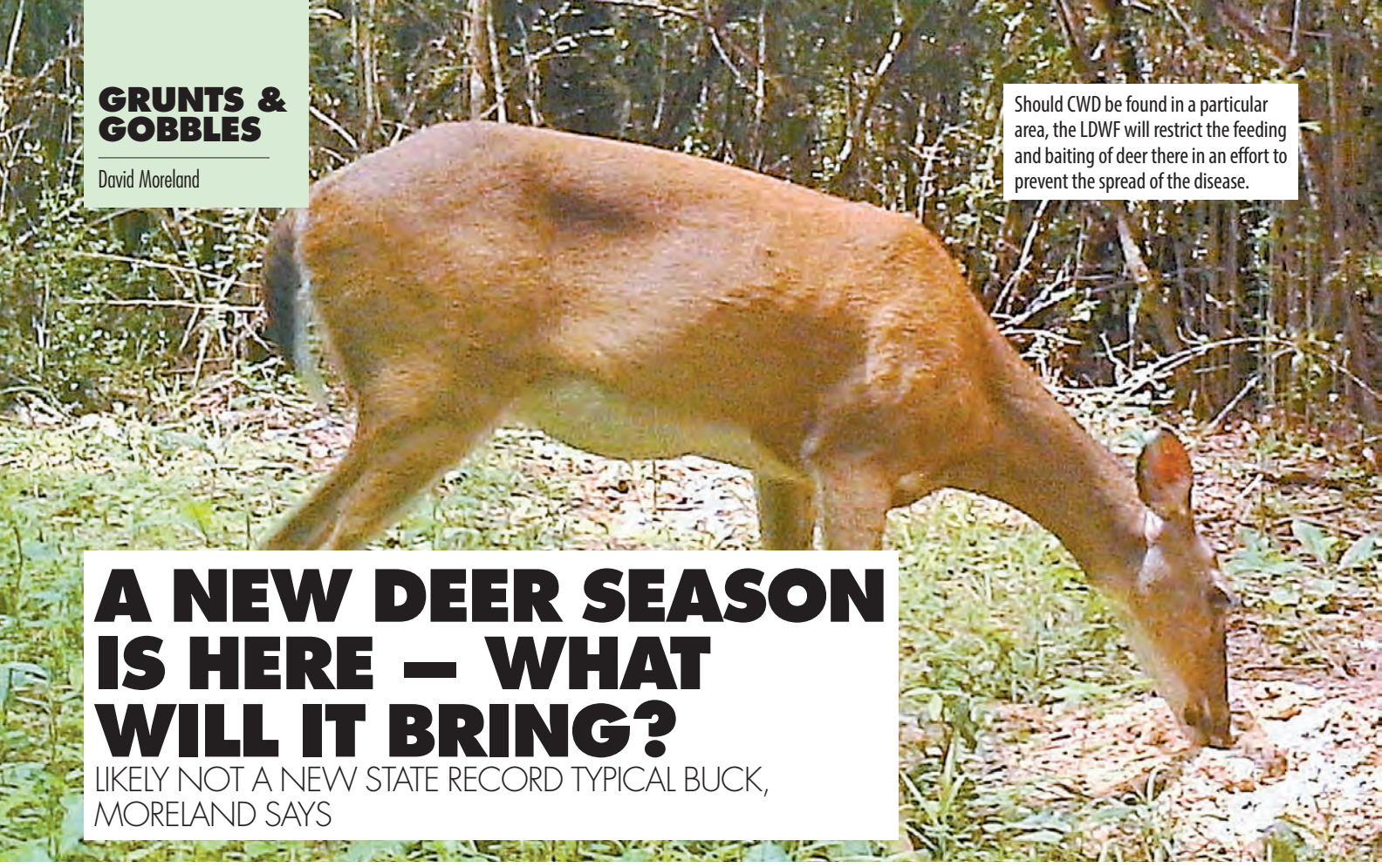


Should CWD be found in a particular area, the LDWF will restrict the feeding and baiting of deer there in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease.

# A NEW DEER SEASON IS HERE — WHAT WILL IT BRING?

## LIKELY NOT A NEW STATE RECORD TYPICAL BUCK, MORELAND SAYS

Except for the issue with chronic wasting disease in Northeast Louisiana, the 2017 season was so-so. Hopefully 2018 will be a little more exciting. But what exactly will does this new season have in store for hunters in the Bayou State?

## A NEW STATE TYPICAL RECORD?

Records are made to be broken, but our Louisiana state record buck in the typical category remains at 184 6/8 B&C, which is the Broadway Buck killed in Madison Parish back in 1943.

When I retired from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in 2007, I originally predicted the record would be broken in the next 10 years. Some eyebrows were raised when I made the statement in this column last year that the record may never be broken due to declines in both the state habitat and hunter effort. In fact, my comments about the declining quality of our deer habitat landed me on a PBS program.

While our state kills a few B&C bucks every year, most are in the non-typical category, and very few typical bucks have challenged the score for the state record typical buck. Seems like as our bucks grow older there is the tendency for racks to produce non-typical points, which deduct from the typical score. For this reason, hunters like a gross score without any deductions being taken for lack of symmetry. Some contests score deer in this manner, and there is always excitement when a potential new state typical buck is announced in the early weeks of the season. I suspect this will happen again this year, but the true tale of the tape will verify any potential record once the 60-day drying period is over.

So, in an effort to challenge you hunters to prove me wrong, I will predict that this record will not be broken again this season. There is just too much that must happen for a new record; the stars and moon must be in correct alignment, the habitat must be so productive that there is adequate nutrition for maximum antler growth and a hunter must be in the right place at the right time. A new state record buck might be out there on the landscape, but it will probably die of old age before being harvested.

## MORE ISSUES WITH CWD

If you're not aware of it, Louisiana is surrounded on all sides by states that have areas where CWD has been detected. The finding of a sick buck in Mississippi early this year resulted in the collecting of 300 deer in Madison, East Carroll and Tensas parishes following the 2017 season. All of them tested negative for the disease, including the 400 deer tested in Mississippi near the area where the sick buck was found. Louisiana has tested more than 8,500 deer since 2002, and none have been positive for CWD, which is good news for the state's hunters. Louisiana will continue testing during the 2018 season.

There is no treatment for the disease, and since CWD has not been detected in the state, the approach that LDWF has taken to address the issue is to prevent the disease from being introduced. That's why the emphasis is on prohibiting the importation of live deer into the state, along with regulations and restrictions on the importation of meat, antlers, skulls and heads that are harvested in other states. These Transport and Possession Regulations were set in place in March of 2017, and hunters must strictly adhere to them.

These regulations also require that hunters adhere to all tagging regulations,

and that leg bones and other by-products be disposed of in a proper manner.

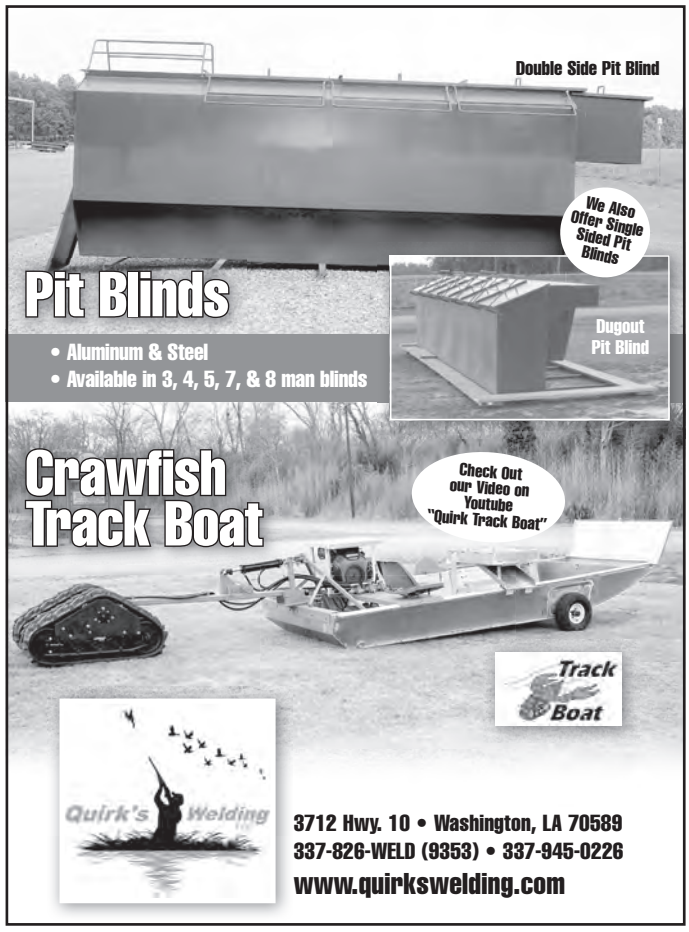
LDWF is recommending that hunters dispose of deer carcasses properly here, with the preferred method being burying the carcasses on the land where they were harvested. During the CWD collection, LDWF used a track-hoe and buried the deer carcasses and sleds used to carry the dead animals out of the woods 6 feet deep. Now most hunters do not have this luxury, and I am way too old to be trying to dig a hole with a shovel to bury deer parts, so just use common sense. Do not dump in ponds, rivers or streams, and do not carry the carcass to other properties to dispose of it. One approved method is to place the bones and parts in a heavy garbage bag and carry it to a landfill. But this too has limitations for many, since there is no landfill where I live and trash pickup is on Fridays — which would require leaving carcass remains in a bag for a week before it is picked up, which is probably not a good idea.

No doubt that the importation of diseased animals and/or carcasses is probably the avenue that the disease would enter our state since it has not been found at all. An article in the Quality Whitetail magazine got a lot of attention when the author showed that hunters from 49 states killed deer from four counties in Wisconsin that have an issue with CWD. The article showed that nine or so hunters from Louisina killed deer in those counties during the 2016-17 season. Now guess what? The meat and carcass restrictions were not in place at that time, nor were they in place prior to that season. It is possible that since CWD has been in elk and deer herds out west since the 60s, the disease may have already entered the state but has just not reared its ugly head.

Hunters need to follow these transportation and possession regulations, as well as report any sick deer encountered during the hunting season.

## MORE DEER HUNTING RESTRICTIONS REGARDING CWD

Should CWD be encountered in the state, there is no doubt LDWF will establish feeding and baiting regulations. The department has already issued warnings to hunters about using deer urines and scents that may be contaminated with the disease. The CWD issue is hitting the deer hunting community hard, but it is something that needs to be addressed. It is possible that hunters could see voluntary testing of deer for CWD, and if it is discovered there would no doubt be mandatory testing in the area where the disease is found. The worst that could happen is for researchers to find a connection between the disease and humans; to date there is no evidence that humans can get the disease from eating infected animals, but should this happen, it would probably spell the end of deer hunting as we know it.




## A PRODUCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL 2018 SEASON

While the CWD issue is something to be alarmed about, the

continues on page 126

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fact that the disease has not been found in the state is good news. From what I have seen driving around the state, the 2018 fawn crop is good. And despite dry conditions, there seems to be a decent acorn crop. I have seen some nice photos of adult bucks that hunters have gotten from their trail cameras, so the stage is set for a good deer season if Mother Nature will provide the right weather that will get the deer moving. Check out the rut

Food plots are probably just as bad as feeding and baiting deer because they concentrate animals in a small area, making transmission of CWD more easy.

calendar in this issue and plan your hunts. Be sure to read the season dates, especially on the wildlife management areas that are different from the private lands. I hope you have a safe and successful season. ▪

**Dave Moreland** *is the author of the new book* Louisiana Whitetails, *which explains how to grow big deer and where to hunt them. The book is available at www.SportsmanGear.com and at Amazon.com.*

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**LURE REVIEW**

Don Shoopman

Chas Champagne, creator of the Matrix Shad line of soft plastic lures, is introducing a new 5-inch Matrix Monster that will be available in stores this fall.

# THE NEW MATRIX MONSTER

## THE BIG 5-INCH VERSION SWIMS JUST LIKE A REGULAR-SIZED MATRIX SHAD

Chas Champagne and charter boat captain Ty Hibbs, both Louisianians, were having a ball this summer catching jack crevalle and the occasional large speckled trout off the coast of Florida.

Champagne was hopeful of catching tarpon on the new and extra large soft plastic swimbait he created, but the silver kings of the ocean couldn't be found, so he targeted jacks. As he did, he talked about a new artificial lure sure to pique the interest of saltwater anglers everywhere interested in catching bigger fish. "Big fish eat big fish. Small fish eat small fish," he said.

Champagne, whose artificial lure manufacturing company in Southeast Louisiana makes the highly popular Matrix Shad soft plastic lure, was using a new 5-inch long swimbait to catch fish that day — a supersized version of the Matrix Shad.

Champagne, Hibbs and Stephen Wicks, a long-time friend and part-owner in the company, designed the new soft plastic to look and vibrate in the water just like the traditional Matrix Shad — and they call it the Matrix Monster.

Champagne is as excited about it now as the day he introduced the Matrix Shad in 2013, and when he did the process in reverse and produced the smaller Matrix Mini in 2016.

The St. Paul's High School and University of Southern Mississippi graduate said the Matrix Monster, which started in design a year ago to blow it up from 3 to 5 inches, should trigger strikes from speckled trout, bull reds, jack crevalle, lemonfish and even tarpon.

Anglers who go out of Venice to fish the oil field structures in 100-foot depths will want to have a supply of Matrix Monsters, and some bass anglers might want to try it, too, he said.

"We want to offer a product for every fisherman in the world, no matter what species they target," he said.

The idea is to make a million baits in a few popular colors, as opposed to a few baits in a million colors, he said.

"Matrix Shad has proven itself as a good product. Now we're offering a lure with the same lifelike presentation for monster fish. It swims exactly like the original one that's so popular. We've already put it to the test and it ended up being exactly what we were hoping it would be," he

continues on page 130

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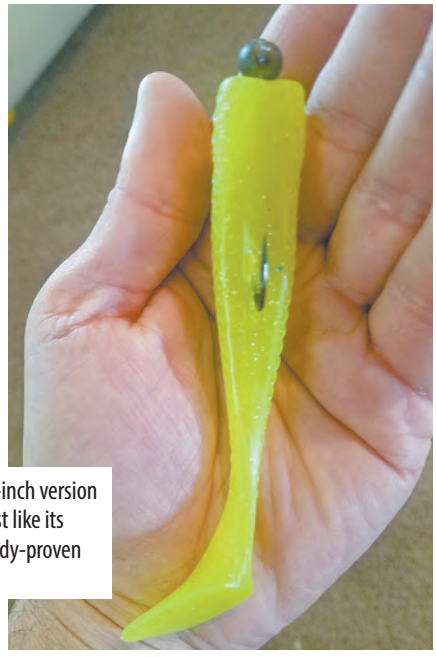
said. "So all three lures (Matrix Shad, Matrix Mini and Matrix Monster) swim exactly the same in the water and look exactly the same — except they are small, medium and large."

The Matrix Monster should hit the market this fall, and they'll likely disappear quickly.

"It's a fish-catching machine. It's a great product," Champagne said. "I can't wait to use it on speckled trout, whenever they come in. We just need cool weather."

If you're wondering if the Matrix Monster might be too large for speckled trout, Champagne said it isn't.

"Not if you're catching 20-inch (speckled trout) or better," he said.



The new Matrix Monster, a 5-inch version of the Matrix Shad, swims just like its namesake — and is an already-proven fish-catching machine.

For sure, it should produce fish in states where anglers rely on bigger artificial lures to put trophy-sized speckled trout in the boat.

"We wanted to create a lure for anglers in other states that like a larger profile bait for speckled trout and redfish. When you go to Texas and Florida, they throw a lot of big swimbaits," he said.

A 1-ounce jighead "fits it very naturally," he said, adding that a 5/0 hook also matches up with it perfectly.

And Matrix Monsters are durable, just like the Matrix Shad.

"You can probably catch 100 speckled trout on one. I caught 10 jack crevalle on one the other day. And that's 20-pound fish," he said.

As for color names, Champagne said he'll let anglers decide via a poll on his website.

For more information, go to matrixshad.com. ▪

**Don Shoopman** *fishes for freshwater and saltwater species mostly in and around the Atchafalaya Basin and Vermilion Bay. He moved to the Sportsman's Paradise in 1976, and he and his wife June live in New Iberia. They have two grown sons.*

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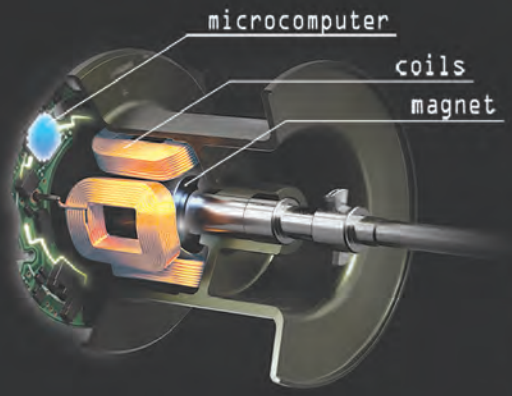


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If fall hunting plans include a trip to the high country, a wellness checkup with your doctor and a physical fitness plan are in order. INSET: Bike riding is a great way to get in shape for hunting season.

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# HUNTING HEALTH AND SAFETY

## NOW'S THE TIME TO GET PHYSICALLY PREPARED FOR THE SEASON

We do a lot of work getting ready for hunting season. Planning trips, choosing the right gear, setting up deer stands and the list goes on and on. Along with all the planning and anticipation we make a considerable financial investment in what we hope will be a successful season.

For me, a big part of planning and preparedness for fall involves health, safety and accident prevention. My primary motivations for being prepared for the unexpected are some of the things I have seen during my career in wildlife law enforcement. Illness or injury can ruin a long-awaited trip, put an end to hunting for the rest of the season and potentially result in permanent disability or death.

Such was the case not too many years ago for a man we'll call Sam. Sam was the oldest of four brothers, all dedicated hunters with a family tradition of a little friendly competition. Sam was middle-aged but would never see a doctor or admit he was slowing down. On opening day of the firearms season for deer, Sam was in the stand early. It was not long before a nice buck showed up. Sam made a good shot and had his buck.

It was still early so Sam decided to drag the buck out, load it in the truck, go back to camp and have the deer hung on the meat pole when his brothers showed up after the morning hunt. And that is just what he did. It was a great deal of exertion, and Sam had just completed getting the deer hung when other members of the party began returning to camp.

Witnesses said Sam was out of breath and sat down just before suffering a massive heart attack. CPR and all efforts at the hospital could not save him. No one knew whether Sam was aware of a heart condition, but a wellness checkup and/or physical fitness program prior to the hunting season might have made a difference.

## SHAPE UP!

Whether we are going out West to hunt the high country or just plan to hunt

deer or waterfowl here in the South, getting in shape for hunting season should be a top priority. A hundred more yards up the ridge might put you in position for a shot at a trophy bull. That's when all the effort spent getting in shape pays off. Don't be the guy gasping for air while looking up at your guide who is already there and motioning frantically at you to hurry before it's too late.

No, we flat-landers won't be able to function as well as the locals at those high elevations. But being in good condition will make acclimating easier, and you might be surprised at how well you can get around. And those of us staying down south will probably find we are able to walk and do more if we are in better shape.

Before starting any fitness routine, visit your primary care physician. Tell him or her your plans and listen to any suggestions on what to do and how to get started. I like riding a bicycle, and 15 miles for three or four days a week helps me prepare for my elk hunt.

## SAFETY ALWAYS

We always think of firearms safety first when hunting is involved. Mandatory Hunter Education Courses have been very effective in reducing firearms-related accidents to the point we rarely hear of one. Far more common now are falls from elevated stands, ATV accidents, cuts and so forth.

Safety harnesses and lifelines have probably saved more hunters than there are hunters who are willing to admit they fell. Prices are reasonable, and I can't imagine using a climbing stand without them. But emergency room physicians will tell you some hunters still climb without harness and line.

ATV and OHV accidents and injuries rise during hunting seasons each year. The increase is due in part to increased use, but steep terrain, side hills and other obstacles found on trails used by hunters contribute to mishaps. Travel with care on new trails and those not used since last season. Trees can fall and block trails and washouts can be a nasty surprise in the dark.

We don't always think of it, but loading a heavy deer or hog in a pickup or ATV without help can lead to sprains, strains, slips and falls. Common sense got the better of me last year, and I purchased a hoist that mounts on the truck and makes loading the big stuff easy and safe.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, when alone always be sure someone knows where you are and when you are expected to return. Carry a cell phone, but don't bet your life on it. A short walk may put you in an area with cell coverage. But what if you can't walk?

The great hunts are those that challenge our abilities and put us to the test. Be ready to go up the mountain — but also get home safe. ▪

*Retired Wildlife Enforcement Lieutenant Colonel* **Keith LaCaze** *spent 34 years with the LDWF beginning in 1977. LaCaze is happily married to wife Mitzi and the father of two children.*


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Sammy Romano

Thick early season cover, such as these briars, leads to narrow shooting lanes and fleeting opportunities.

# 'DRAW' YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS

TIMING YOUR DRAW IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU'LL DO WITH A DEER IN RANGE

Much of the allure of bowhunting is the challenge it presents. Many things have to go right for a bowhunter to successfully harvest game. First, the quarry has to be at close range and unaware of the hunter's presence. Then, the bow must be drawn without alerting the animal, and the shot has to be made accurately for a clean kill. Finally, the animal must be trailed for a successful recovery.

While each of these elements is vital to a successful outcome, one of the most important is drawing the bow unnoticed. This simple act will ultimately determine the outcome of the hunt.

## TIMING IS CRUCIAL

Timing your draw is one of the hardest skills to learn. Think about this: A beginning bowhunter can hunt from a stand placed in the correct location by someone more experienced. After the shot, he or she can have someone else trail the animal and recover it. But at the moment of truth, when drawing the bow and making the shot, the outcome rests squarely on the bowhunter. Proper shooting form and accuracy can be learned and practiced, but learning to time your draw properly can only be practiced in real time from the stand while in the presence of game. No amount of coaching can replace experience and time in the stand when it comes to this skill.

Each species of game presents its own challenges and requires a slightly different strategy. Since a majority of bowhunters target deer, that is the focus of this article.

Whitetails are often hunted in thick cover, and shots often have to be timed to take advantage of narrow shooting lanes.

One mistake beginning bowhunters often make is drawing too early. I often hear about a hunter drawing their bow while the deer is "behind a tree," or just before it steps into a shooting lane. Often, the deer either catches movement or hears the draw and instinctively freezes, with its vitals obscured by brush or the tree trunk.

This rarely winds up well for the hunter. The deer has no schedule and often stands still for several minutes, while the hunter is holding the full weight of the bow, as well as the holding weight of the draw. Eventually, the frustrated hunter is forced to let the draw down, and that motion often spooks the alerted deer.

A better option would be to wait until the animal's vitals are exposed, and then slowly draw when it is looking away or has its head down feeding. This way, if it freezes, its vitals are fully exposed for a shot opportunity. Watching a deer's front feet will also help in this situation. Just before stepping forward into a clearing, the deer will lift its front foot. This will help you to be ready to draw and shoot before the deer crosses the lane.

Deer that are walking steadily present a different challenge. It is generally best to wait for the deer to stop before taking the shot, but bucks are often on a mission and therefore steadily walking. These deer can be stopped by bleating with your mouth; however, you need to be ready to release the arrow quickly, because their focus will shift to you.

Upon hearing the bleat, a deer will naturally tense its muscles, preparing to flee until it identifies the source of the unknown noise — increasing the odds of string-jumping. A good trick is to bleat after you are already drawn and on target, and as the deer is stopping, release the shot. This way, the deer's momentum will prevent it from reacting.

## SPEAK A DEER'S BODY LANGUAGE

It also helps to watch a whitetail's body language before attempting to draw. For many years, whitetails were thought to be silent creatures, and although we know they make a wide variety of vocalizations, most of their communication is through posturing and body language.

For the hunter, learning to read this body language requires a lot of time in the stand observing deer. Generally, it is best not to draw when in a deer's direct line of sight, or if its ears are cupped in your direction. This will usually result in a blown opportunity. Also, if a deer is visibly nervous or on edge, it is best to wait for the animal to relax before trying

**PICK YOUR SHOT:**
When a buck is looking your way and has its ears cupped toward you, your chances of successfully drawing on it aren't very good.

to draw. Multiple animals means more eyes and ears, and will only make drawing unnoticed even harder.

Time spent in the presence of deer will allow you to gauge the "mood" or "vibe" of the animal(s) in front of you. If they are keyed up, it is better to wait and live to fight another day. Once deer identify the location of your stand, especially catching your movement at close range, your chances for success are slim to none.

Most lessons are best learned the hard way, and I have learned far more from blown opportunities than anything else. Each missed opportunity offers a lesson. So spend as much time in the woods as you can this and every season, and learn all that you can. Bowhunting is truly an art, and nothing replaces experience when it comes to perfecting your mastery of it. ▪

**Sammy Romano** *is a lifelong hunter who has worked in the archery industry for more than 24 years. His expertise includes compounds and crossbows. He can be reached at samboka31@aol.com.*

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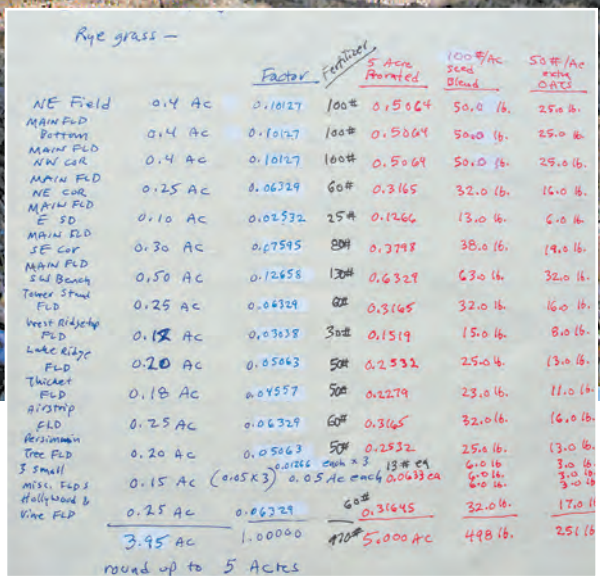
Bill Garbo

The author putting out seed and fertilizer on one of his food plots. **INSET:** The author's hand calculations, field by field, showing acreage and seed and fertilizer proration.

# WHAT'S WRONG WITH SIMPLE?

## DETERMINE ACCURATE FOOD PLOT ACREAGE WITH EASY MATH




October is finally here, and beyond sitting in a stand and bowhunting, you know what that means. It is once again time to plant food plots.

As many opinions on how best to plan, prepare, and plant food plots exist as there are hunters you could ask. Over the years, I have used many different techniques and methods. Some have worked well for me, and some have not.

Seed and fertilizer are too expensive and critical to success to make an estimate and hope for the best. The trick is to put down enough on each plot, but to not waste time and money on more than enough. Most hunter/plot planters pretty much wing it and put down too much or not enough seed and fertilizer. To modify an old adage, an ounce of planning is worth a pound of results.

## HOW TO MEASURE

The first thing you need to have is a fairly accurate measurement of each food plot in acres or fractions of an acre, and the overall total acreage that will be prepared, planted and fertilized.

I have friends who swear by digital, online GPS area measurements that are obtained by walking the perimeter of a food plot, tagging GPS waystations repeatedly, then letting the map app they are using calculate the enclosed area in acres or square feet. I've tried it; it's nifty and cutting edge, but most of the time, I found that I was spending more time and taking more steps to derive plot sizes than if I just used some very simple, non-technical methods. I may have an engineering degree, but I love simple, efficient methods to accomplish tasks.

Let me explain. Most food plots are created in some version of a circle, square or rectangle. If a given plot's geometry is circular or oval, the basic calculation for the area of a circle that we were all introduced to in school is: Area = ∏ (the constant Pi which is 3.142) x $R^2$ (the plot's radius multiplied by itself). Who wouldn't be able to figure that quickly, using only a little boot leather and the calculator on their phone?

## CIRCLES, RECTANGLES

Let's walk through the process quickly. You drive up to your circle-shaped plot with only a pencil, a pocket notebook and your iPhone. Dismount, walk over to one side of the plot and start stepping off roughly 36-inch strides aimed across the plot's center to the other side. Let's say you step off 50 steps across the plot.

**FOOD PLOT MATH:**

- What's the general plot shape?
- Step off the measurements.
- Calculate the area in square feet.
- An acre covers 43,560 square feet.
- Convert plot square-footage to acres.
- Decide on seeding and fertilizer rates.
- Multiply acreage times rates.
- Add it up and make your purchase.
- Apply to each plot as calculated.
- Cover and wait for rain.

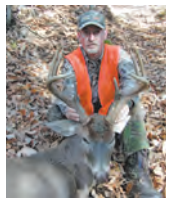
The author drag harrowing (covering) the seed and fertilizer he just put down.

Multiply 50 times 3 feet per step, the result is a diameter of 150 feet. That means that the radius, which is half the diameter, is 75 feet. The area in square feet would be: 3.142 x $75^2$, resulting in a calculation of 17,674 square feet. To convert that to acres, it is as simple as the old saying, "falling off a log backwards." In your notebook, you would have already written down 43,560, the number of square feet in an acre — or you would have had the number committed to memory. In this case, divide the area of the plot you stepped off in square feet, 17,674, by the square footage per acre, 43,560, and you get an acreage for the subject plot of .40, or in other words, four-tenths of an acre.

Now, you can calculate the volume of seed and fertilizer you need. As an example, using a desired seed rate of 100 pounds per acre and a fertilizer rate of 300 pounds per acre, the needed amount of each is:

- 0.4 x 100 = 40 pounds of seed;
- 0.4 x 300 = 120 pounds of fertilizer.

The exact same measurement technique applies to food plots that are square or rectangular in shape, the only difference being that you simply step off and measure length and width along the sides. A boomerang-shaped plot would be measured as if it were actually a regular rectangle. A plot shaped like a "Y," would be measured in three segments, as if each segment was a rectangle and then all three added together for the total acreage. See, when your teacher told you that you would be using those math problems in later life, it really was true. ▪



**Bill Garbo** *is a petroleum engineer and avid whitetail hunter from Madison, Miss. He has lived and hunted out west and taken numerous big game species, but hunting big old mature southern whitetail bucks is his favorite pursuit by a country mile.*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Chris Holmes

# 'FALL' FOR TROUT

## COOL TEMPS AND CLOSE FISH ARE A KAYAKER'S DREAM

**Chris Holmes** *has kayak fished in the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and many places in between. He can be reached at cholmes@att.net.*

Fall is finally here. The trout are on the move back into the marsh, and that's great news for kayakers. The shorter days are coupled with shorter paddles, there' no need for live bait and great catches of speckled trout await. Oh, and did I mention the pleasant weather?

As the cold fronts continue to push through, the fish get more predictable and more concentrated. Different from the strong fronts of winter where the water gets low and dirty in the days immediately following, these minor fronts help move the bait and concentrate the fish. So don't overlook fishing the days immediately after a mild front moves through.

The best thing about fall 'yak fishing is that there is no need for live bait. (Although it is still available and, of course, still works.) One tackle tray of your favorite lures is all you need to have a successful trout trip this time of year.

Simply make your lure selections to allow you to cover the water from top to bottom, and you're all set. Select a few topwater lures in natural colors, in small to medium sizes. Even on cool days, the topwater action can be hot. Many anglers mistakenly believe that topwater lures only work for spring and summer trout. But they are actually effective all year long — even in winter.

For fish that are not interested in hitting on top, try small suspending baits that can be worked just under the surface or allowed to sink a little deeper before beginning the retrieve. Trout can't resist the action of the twitch-and-stop retrieve of a suspending bait. The hits almost always come on the stop, when the lure slowly falls off and simulates a dying or injured baitfish.

Popping corks are another fall favorite. You can easily cover the area surrounding a kayak, and they work great as a search bait to find where trout are holding. Experiment with different brands of corks, as the sound and action can make a difference. Some days, loud and splashy is what they want, but sometimes subtle pops without a lot of noise is what gets them fired up.

Fall is also a great time to try drifting and trolling. Often, the fish are spread across large flats or shallow lagoons and aren't piled into one area. Kayaks make great platforms to slowly and

CONTINUES >

Don't put away those topwater baits when the weather turns cool — specks will smash them all fall long.

quietly cover large expanses of water. The keys to successful trolling/drifting is speed and depth.

Using light jigheads (1/16- to 1/8-ounce) rigged with a plastic tail allows the lure more action and helps keep it from snagging on the bottom. However, you want the lure to bounce along the bottom as the 'yak moves along. Adjust the amount of line you let out until you can feel the lure bouncing along. Slowly move in a grid pattern until you get bit.

Take notice of how fast you were going and your location, so you can establish a successful pattern and repeat similar passes.

And don't overlook casting while dragging baits out the back. You won't be able to thoroughly cover an area, but casting a lure or popping cork on either side, out in front of the kayak, adds an extra chance to reel one in.

Trout are literally within sight of most launches during the fall. There's no need to make unnecessarily long paddles. Of course you probably have your preferred hot spots, but there may be no need to paddle that far. Cast or troll your way as you head to your intended destination and you may discover fish you would have passed up. ▪

# STICK IT TO 'EM: PADDLE SMART STICKERS COULD SAVE LIVES

Started a few years ago, Operation Paddle Smart is a goal of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to educate paddle-sport enthusiasts on how to stay safe, be responsible boaters and help emergency responders in search and rescue (SAR) situations. They provide Paddle Smart weatherproof stickers that can easily be placed on paddlecraft to help identify and contact the owner or other designated contact.

Two numbers are recommended since cell phones can be rendered inoperable if they get wet. The square, orange reflective stickers can be written on with a permanent marker. It is suggested that they be placed on the inner sides of the kayak where they are easily visible. Another tip is to cover the completed sticker with clear packing tape to keep the information from fading and to offer a protective coating. The goal of the program is to make boating safer and more enjoyable, as well as help recover lost property as well as save lives in the event of an emergency.

With no registration required for most kayaks, if they are found adrift it can be difficult to tell if it is just a wayward kayak or if the occupant(s) are actually missing. If it's the latter, time can be critical in launching a search and rescue mission. But if it is just a wayward kayak, huge amounts of time and money might be wasted conducting a search when it is unnecessary. Having timely access to this information can conserve resources and possibly save lives.

One of the best safety tips for plying the waters in tiny vessels is to make yourself as visible as possible. When practical, choose brightly-colored kayaks and clothing. Another simple sticker offered by the Coast Guard is a silver Mylar reflective sticker to place on your kayak paddle. The mirror-like sticker can be invaluable in signaling other craft, and even to help rescuers find you in an emergency. Bearing the Paddle Responsibly logo, the round stickers go on the blades of your paddle. The highly reflective material acts as a signaling mirror, but also provides flashes with every paddle stroke to make other boaters aware of your presence. It's a simple idea that also can help save lives.

For information on the stickers and other safe paddling information and programs, contact your local Coast Guard Auxiliary unit by going to: www.cgaux.org/units.php. ▪

These free stickers from the Coast Guard Auxiliary can save valuable time during search and rescue operations.

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# NEW GEAR REVIEW

The all-new 2019 Hobie Outback has literally been redesigned from top to bottom.

## HOBIE'S ALL-NEW 2019 OUTBACK

The Hobie Outback has been the world's best-selling kayak for quite a while. Its feature-rich platform utilizing the unique Mirage Drive pedal system kept it a step above all other fishing kayaks — and it's likely just jumped a few more steps.

"The Outback is the world's best-selling kayak for a reason," said Doug Skidmore, CEO of Hobie. "We've kept all of the attributes that made it so popular, but continue to push the limits of what the ultimate pedal kayak can offer. With the advancement of the Outback, we've created a next-generation kayak that is unmatched in versatility, features and thoughtful design."

The hull has been redesigned as a hybrid of the best of several recent Hobie models. These unique features were blended to produce a sleek new hull that is quieter, faster and more stable. A 34-inch wide standing deck makes a great casting platform, and the MirageDrive 180 (reverse) with ARC Cranks and Turbo Fins is now standard on all Outback models.

So what else is new? The carrying capacity has been upped by 25 pounds to 425. It is 8 inches longer, 1 inch wider and only 4 pounds heavier.

The hull incorporates Hobie's all new Guardian Transducer Shield, which allows mounting the latest, large transducers to provide access to state-of-the-art Total Scan fish and structure finding capabilities.

The Guardian allows the transducer to be deployed below the hull for best signal capabilities. With the easy pull of a handle, it can be retracted into the hull to prevent damage in shallow areas and for kayak transport.

The cockpit has been totally redesigned with a vertically opened, large rectangular hatch providing ample dry storage at your fingertips. The new hatch lends way to a wide, padded standing area for sight-casting ease.

The new recessed storage on each side includes Hobie's H-Track Deluxe with H-Rail integrated track, for mounting a wide variety of accessories and customization. The H-Track Deluxe provides slots for pliers and fish grips with bungee tie-downs.

A separate outer edge H-Track track mounting system gives even more room for accessories. Dual rubber map pockets provide quick, secure storage for all those loose ends. And the adjustable Vantage seat is wider and provides more room and comfort.

The stern incorporates a large carry handle similar to those found on Pro Angler models, and the recessed Kick-Up Rudder system with dual steering combats drift and provides instantly responsive turning.

Brass inserts are pre-installed for ease of mounting an optional Micro Power Pole without the need for a mounting plate. The ample sized tank well is great for tackle crates, coolers or live-wells.

The rear sides also include storage area with the H-Track Deluxe mounting system minus the H-Rails. Two recessed utility trays are molded into the gunwales on each side of the seat.

Yes, there's even more. Four molded-in rod holders, a large storage compartment in the bow and two drink-holder recesses. It comes in six great colors, including camo.

The all-new Outback has transformed the most trusted pedal kayak on the market into a truly legendary one. Fresh or salt, inshore, offshore, fishing or hunting, the Hobie Outback is ready to help you conquer it all. The MSRP starts at $2,799.

**For more information:**
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**BEST BETS** UP NEXT >

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# OCTOBER'S BEST BETS

## SALTWATER

**WHERE:** Hopedale

**WHAT:** Trout, reds

**HOW:** Trout are solidly moving into the marsh. Try slow drifting or trolling in Hopedale Lagoon using light jigheads with plastic tails. Move just fast enough to keep the bait bouncing off the bottom. While moving, throw a plastic under a popping cork as a search bait. If you catch a fish, quietly stake out and fish the area thoroughly before continuing on. Dig those topwater baits out of your box and give them a try. The fall topwater bite is often fantastic. Don't overlook fishing the MRGO rock dam a little farther down the road. With depths up to 40 feet, a variety of species congregate around the dam, especially after a couple of cold fronts. Live or dead baits fished near the bottom attract redfish, with big bulls reeled-in regularly. For trout, throw tight-lined plastic tails on 1/4- to 3/8-ounce jigheads depending on the current movement (yes, the current moves through the rock wall). Suspending baits like a MirrOdine and lipless crankbaits like a Rat-L-Trap work great along the rocks. Don't let the baits go to the bottom or they will snag on the rocks that line the bottom of the dam structure.

**LAUNCH:** For Hopedale Lagoon, launch at the old Pip's Place on the right side of Hopedale Highway. There is a concrete ramp with an honor box ($5). Parking is just across the street. For the MRGO area, launch at Hopedale Marina on the right, at the end of Hopedale Highway. A recently installed kayak launch makes accessing the water a breeze, and secure parking is close by. There's a $5 launch fee.

## FRESHWATER

**WHERE:** Chicot Lake (Chicot State Park)

**WHAT:** Bass, sac-a-lait (white perch)

**HOW:** With the changing weather comes schooling bass. Bait is penned up near points, mouths of channels and coves where the bass literally feast on them. Keep an eye out for surface action and slowly move in just close enough to cast. They will likely be feeding on shad, so throw natural-colored spinnerbaits or lipless crankbaits like a chrome or shad Rat-L-Trap. If the fish are frenzied, strikes come as soon as the lure hits the water. However, if the surface action slows, allow the lure to sink a bit before starting the retrieve. Try this at varying depths, as the fish are likely still in the area. With no freezing weather yet, the grass is still thick. Punching a jig or heavily weighted weedless plastic is the best way to get to bass hiding just under the thick cover. If your kayak is stable enough for standing, punching is a great way to get to these fish. Be careful on the hookset, as a missed or pulled fish can easily send you out the opposite side of the 'yak. Look for sac-a-lait near brush piles ready to take live shiners or tiny tube jigs in blue/white or black-and-chartreuse.

**LAUNCH:** There are three launches within the park that provide access to the myriad of coves, fingers and open water areas. Park entrance: 3469 Chicot Park Road in Ville Platte. Park entrance fee is $3. More info: www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/parks/chicot-state-park/.

Great catches of specks can be had close to many launches during the fall. Start fishing as soon as you head out, and you may not have to paddle far before hitting pay dirt.

# RIPPIN' LIPS

The author caught this nice fall speckled trout in Hopedale Lagoon on a suspending twitchbait.

Jerald & Glenda Horst

# TOOTIE COOKS 'EARNESTLY'

## SHREVEPORT PERSONAL CHEF GETS CREATIVE IN THE KITCHEN

It was just a short hop from the Residence Inn in Bossier City to Chef Tootie home near the shores of Cross Lake in Shreveport. But I didn't know what to expect.

It was a 5 ½-hour drive each way from home in Southeast Louisiana and she came highly recommended, but .... Boy was I surprised. She put on the culinary Ritz.

Tootie, it turns out, is a personal chef, so she can roll out the red carpet — one with taste buds on it.

Fried catfish, turnip greens and cornbread are holy manna in this part of the country. It's great food, and she can do it, but she can do creative things too. And she did.

The seared panko grouper on kale has an exciting and unique flavor profile. **INSET:** Cooking became a second career for Chef Tootie after rearing her children and then graduating from culinary school at age 35.

Her business, "Earnestly Tooties," (318-617-6633) is a take-off on her name, Ernestine, and her late father's, Ernest. He always liked to see her real name in press about her cooking, and to this day she wears one of his neckties to every cooking assignment.

She does meal prep, intimate dining, dinner parties and conducts private cooking classes, all in peoples' homes.

Dinner parties are for eight to 12 people, and she cooks, plates and serves the food.

Cooking classes are for people who want to learn basic to advanced cooking techniques.

She says her strength is Southern cooking, but that isn't her focus. She describes her style as simple, yet bold. "I want the ingredients to speak for themselves and not be muddled ....

"Cooking is a creative adventure; it's relaxing. I tend to hum while I cook. I'm ADHD and my brain is always moving. This allows me to be creative and multi-task, but cooking reins in and focuses my energy. It centers me." ▪

# SEARED PANKO GROUPER ON KALE

The choice of an offshore ocean fish may seem odd for a chef in landlocked Shreveport, but local cooks are blessed with a Farmer's Seafood, a superb full-line seafood store.

"I learned how to cook kale this way in Africa" said Tootie. "I learned that kale is not just for garnish anymore. They prepared it without the fish.

"The panko topping can be used on any seafood to add texture to the dish," she added. Panko, a finely textured bread crumb made from crustless white bread, has become very popular in the last decade as a coating for seafood and vegetables. Here, it is used as a topping to add a delightful crunch to every bite of fish.

The dish tastes like the sea and the garden at the same time. The green of the kale is very prominent, but definitely doesn't overwhelm the fish and panko. And the sliced lemon adds a delightful tang. ▪

**TIP!**

This recipe will work with any firm, white-fleshed fish: cobia, snapper — even halibut or cod. But the portions are best cut from a fish large enough to produce thick steaks.

## INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. boneless fish, cut into 4 serving portions
1 bunch fresh kale
2 tbsp. olive oil
1/2 thinly sliced lemon with rind
1/4 cup chopped stuffed olives
2 tbsp. chopped parsley
3 1/2 tbsp. butter, divided
2 cups panko
1 tsp. lemon zest
Salt and pepper to taste
1 tbsp. olive oil

## PREPARATION: Serves 2-4.

Wash fish and set aside. Remove stems from the kale and rough-chop it. Saute the kale in olive oil set on high heat to start. Stir and lower to medium in five minutes. Add the sliced lemon olives and 1 1/2 cups of water. When the added water begins to steam, reduce the heat to low and cover, stirring occasionally to cook the greens evenly. Turn off the heat when the greens are soft. While the greens are cooking, melt 2 1/2 tbsp. butter in a large frying pan, then add the panko, parsley, lemon zest and salt to taste. Toast the panko, stirring constantly over medium-low heat until golden brown, turn off heat and set it aside. Salt and pepper the fish portions to taste. Add 1 tbsp. butter and the olive oil to a separate pan and heat until bubbles form. Add the fish, patting each piece down firmly to be in contact with the pan. Turn each piece when the down side is lightly crusted brown. Frequently test for doneness by pressing the flesh with a finger. It is done when it feels firm rather than soft. Make four beds of kale. Place a fish portion on top of each bed, and top with the toasted panko.

RIGHT: The panko mixture should be toasted to a rich — but not dark — brown color for maximum flavor and crunch.

**RED SNAPPER WITH ROASTED CORN RELISH** UP NEXT >

**Jerald** *and* **Glenda Horst** *are the authors of six excellent books on Louisiana seafood — The Seafood Bible: Shrimp, The Seafood Bible: Crawfish, The Seafood Bible: Crabs, The Seafood Bible: Oysters, The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volumn I and The Seafood Bible: Fish: Volumn 2. Jerald and Glenda may be contacted at jerald@rockinghorst.com.*

# RED SNAPPER WITH ROASTED CORN RELISH

## INGREDIENTS:

4 half-pound skin-on red snapper fillets
4 large ears of corn, cleaned
2 large orange, yellow or red bell peppers
4 Hass avocados
Juice of 2 lemons, divided
4 tbsp. sour cream
Salt and pepper
1 cup chopped red onions
2 tbsp. finely chopped parsley + chopped parsley for garnish
16 cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
5 tbsp. olive oil

**HOW TO MAKE IT!** >

Everything in Red Snapper with Roasted Corn Relish is great, but the avocado mousse is so good you'll want to bathe in it. Once you taste it, you will want to use it elsewhere.

This dish, one of her inventions, was one that Tootie prepared as a special at Abby Singer's Bistro, where she was executive chef for six years. One of her signature dishes, it is one that she now prepares as part of her personal chef service.

"I love snapper," she cooed. "It doesn't have dense flesh and can be cooked many ways — frying, pan searing, broiling, and it always produces a finished product you can be proud of. Just don't overcook it." ■

**PREPARATION:** Serves 4.

Wash the fish fillets and set them aside. Roast the corn and bell pepper by laying them on a gas burner, turning them to get all sides blistered. Halve the avocados, discard the seeds and scoop the flesh into a mini food processor. Add the juice of one lemon, sour cream and 2 tsp. salt. Blend to make a mousse and set it aside. Cut the kernels off the ears of corn and discard the cobs. Remove the stem and seeds and dice the peppers without peeling the blistered skin off. Mix the corn, pepper and tomatoes to make a relish and set it aside. Score the snapper fillets on the skin side with a knife several times, and salt and pepper them to taste. Add the olive oil to a frying pan and heat over medium heat. Cook the fillets four or five minutes, skin-side down first, until the skin is crispy. Flip the fillets and cook for 30 more seconds. Turn the heat off and give each fillet a squirt of lemon juice, but allow the fillets to rest in the pan. Daub a large smear of the avocado mousse in each plate and lay the fillet skin-side up diagonally across the mousse. Spoon the desired amount of relish over each fillet, garnish with parsley and serve.

**TIP!**

If the corn isn't popping when the ears are being roasted, the fire isn't hot enough. You will need a gas stove to roast the vegetables for this dish.

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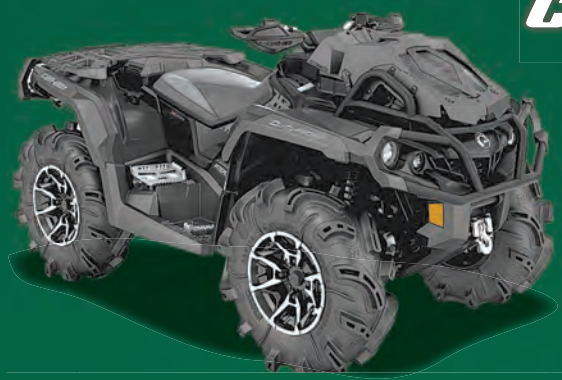

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# TREE STAND SAFETY TIPS

By Patrick Bonin

## CONNECTING TO A LIFELINE — BEFORE EVER LEAVING THE GROUND — IS KEY

With bow season cranking up across almost the entire state on Monday, Oct. 1, that means hunters will once again be heading into the woods and getting positioned up in their favorite trees in hopes of a close encounter with that big buck they've been watching on their trail cameras.

But using your climber or ladder stand comes with some risks, as accidents can happen fast at 20 or 30 feet in the pre-dawn hours in the deer woods. One misplaced step, a mud-caked boot or even an icy platform late in the season can lead to disaster.

Sean Ferbrache, chief operating officer for the American Hunting Lease Association, said the No. 1 tip for hunter safety is staying connected to the tree with a lifeline — before ever even leaving the ground.

### 1. STAY CONNECTED

"For being a simple rope, it's kind of a new thing. Attaching your safety harness to a lifeline while you're still standing on the ground, then proceeding up the tree, virtually eliminates tree stand falls," Ferbrache said. "If you're connected, you cannot fall to the ground.

"You might fall 2 or 3 feet and get a bit of a jolt, but that's nothing compared to falling 20 or 30 feet and having the ground stop your fall."

The key to the lifeline system is a Prusik knot, which can slide freely up and down the lifeline as you ascend and descend the tree — but cinches tight in the event of a fall.

The lifeline, which can be installed in the tree initially by using a lineman's belt, is positioned above the hunter's head up in the stand, and also attaches to the base of the tree to provide tension on the rope in the event of a fall.

### 2. REMOVE AND INSPECT YOUR EQUIPMENT

Not making the effort to remove stands after hunting season ends can sometimes have deadly consequences.

"Every one of us that hunts seriously hangs a tree stand, and you get it the way you like it and have it in a good spot — and then you leave it," Ferbrache said. "It'll be there next year and the year after that. Some of us have even seen tree stands literally grown into the tree ….

"The problem with that is those cables rust, the straps get chewed on and dry rot, and they get wet and eventually deteriorate. You might hunt in that tree stand 10 years in a row, and that one time where you put all your weight on it and you're not buckled in is all it takes. Then boom — you're on the ground and you're lucky if you have a chance to get to a hospital, because there are people who don't survive that initial fall."

After each season, Ferbrache said he cleans up his stands, and then does preventative maintenance like painting, replacing bolts and inspecting cables to make sure they're ready for the following fall.

### 3. BUCKLE YOUR SAFETY HARNESS

This one seems like a no-brainer, but you probably know someone who insists that harnesses just aren't comfortable, or the tether interferes with their draw.

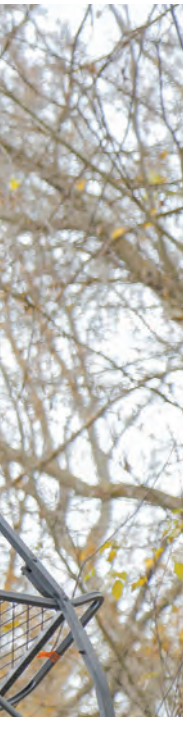
Wearing a safety harness and attaching yourself to a lifeline before ever leaving the ground are keys to tree stand safety.

"Wearing a full-body safety harness is a necessity — no more waist belts that don't really do the job," he said. "A full-body safety harness that goes around your legs and under your arms has to be buckled on every time," Ferbrache said. "It's the cornerstone of tree stand safety — you've just got to be buckled in."

And the beauty of the harness in combo with the lifeline is that you're literally always connected before making your first step up the tree.

"Honestly, my balance isn't what it was 10 years ago," he said. "So you get 20 or 30 feet up in the air and you step from a skinny ladder onto a skinny platform — things can get wobbly pretty fast.

"If that tree stand slips out from under you and you weren't already connected, you might be wearing your harness — but you weren't buckled in."



So this season, take those extra steps to make sure you're extra-safe up in your stand — if not for you, then for your family members.

"Falls are unnecessary and are 100 percent preventable," Ferbrache said. "The average age of a person who falls from a tree is 47. It's those of us who know better that are the ones falling.

"That's surprising to me, but the numbers bear that out." ■

A summer of battling redfish in the salty waters of South Louisiana can shorten the life of your reels. But adding a little Corrosion X before putting them up for the winter can have them ready for action next spring.

Andy Crawford

# PREP YOUR REELS NOW FOR 2019 SEASON

## USE CORROSION X IN THE RED CAN, GUIDE SAYS

By Andy Crawford

The 2018 fishing season is almost over for those of us diehard hunters. We'll trade in the rod for a rifle or shotgun, and spend the rest of the year in the woods or a blind.

And we all too often just prop our rods in the corner and forget about them until we need them next year.

Only to discover a season of coastal fishing has left enough gunk in the spinning reels to seize them up.

That's sure to cause problems with the wife when you order replacements.

But veteran charter guide Capt. Brent Roy said a little TLC could save you money in reels later.

All it takes is a small squirt of an anti-corrosion product called Corrosion X.

"I'll back off the screws of the side plates just enough so I can squeeze the little straw into the hole, and I hit the button once," Roy said.

He then tights up the screws and turns the handle.

"I turn the handle about 50 times to let that liquid get into the gears, and then I'm done," the owner of Venice Charters said.

It's important to note there are two versions of Corrosion X: one in a red can and another in a green can.

Use the red version, which is a liquid instead of a gel.

"It will creep into all those gears, and it breaks all that stuff up," Roy said.

The return on the small investment in time will amaze you.

"That makes a huge, huge difference," Roy said. "When I get (the reels) out in the spring, they are ready to go."

Corrosion X is so good at its job that the impact lasts for a long time.

"You don't have to put Corrosion X in each year, but if you do it every couple of years your reels will last a lot longer," he said. ▪

# IT ALL ADDS UP
## TO MORE FISH IN THE BOAT.

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# TOP TIPS TO LOAD UP ON CRABS

Todd Masson

There's no better time than the present to catch tasty blue crabs like this one all along Louisiana's coast.

## FOLLOW THESE SUGGESTIONS TO FILL YOUR HAMPER

By Todd Masson

It's difficult to think of any savory dish that isn't made more elegant and profoundly more delicious by the addition of one of two ingredients: bacon or crabmeat. I can't tell you where to get a great deal on the former, but I can definitely clue you in on how to load up on the latter.

Crabbing is in full swing across the Louisiana coast, and it's downright silly in certain areas, like the lower Barataria Basin.

It's an activity that consumes many of my summertime hours because it's thoroughly enjoyable, and the culinary payoffs exceed just about any other outdoor venture.

Blue crabs have quite a range, extending from Nova Scotia, down the Atlantic Coast, through the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea to Venezuela and even down the Brazilian Coast all the way to northern Argentina, according to Jerald Horst, author of The Louisiana Seafood Bible: Crabs.

More specifically, here in Louisiana, blue crabs range from the pure fresh waters of the Atchafalaya Basin and western reaches of Lake Maurepas out to the saltiest barrier islands and even around platforms in the open Gulf of Mexico.

My family, friends and I do most of our recreational crabbing somewhere in between, mining the brackish waters that support more males than salt-loving females.

Inexperienced crabbers often assume there's not a whole lot of art or skill involved in attracting the tasty crustaceans. You just bait up a net, throw it out and they'll find you.

In reality, consistently successful crabbing takes as much forethought and preparation as successful fishing.

I've been crabbing recreationally all my life, and have had the good fortune to learn from some of the best. And really, the best teacher has been trial-and-error. The following is what I've learned — hopefully you can use it to fill a hamper soon.

### 1. GO EARLY

This is more important in the summertime than it is in the fall. Crabs are most active when water temperatures are at their coolest, from dawn until about 9 a.m. If you sleep in, you'll be frying up your spare chicken necks for dinner.

### 2. PUT OUT TEST STRINGS

Unless I'm supremely confident in one particular area, I'll put out test strings of

three or four nets in various areas to see where the crabs are holding. When I find the mother lode, I'll bomb that area.

## 3. WORK LEDGES ADJACENT TO DEEP WATER

My favorite crabbing depth is about 10 feet, but I want deeper water close by. That doesn't mean I don't test shallower waters, however. On one of my most recent trips, I found the largest concentration of crabs in 5-foot depths. That's unusual, but I certainly wasn't complaining. I bombed that area, and quickly caught 120 keepers.

## 4. USE FRESH CHICKEN

Crabs eat dead things for a living, so you wouldn't think they'd be particularly picky, but I've found over the years that fresh chicken works far better than chicken that's been frozen. Some days, it doesn't matter, but other days, it really does.

## 5. USE 2 TO 3 DOZEN NETS — AND RUN THEM CONSTANTLY

Some inexperienced crabbers will put out their nets, and let them sit while they fish for a while. This is crazy. If you're in an area with a good crab population, you'll return to baitless nets or stripped chicken bones. If you want to fish, do it after you're done crabbing.

## 6. RUN YOUR BOAT INTO THE CURRENT

Doing this will put you over the net while it's being picked up. Going with the current will result in nets that frequently flip over, costing you your haul.

## 7. TAKE KIDS

Crabbing produces a ton of action, so kids really don't have time to get bored. Also, there's a certain danger aspect that kids enjoy. Crabs are mean, and they can hurt you, so kids naturally think they're cool. Just make sure to provide the youngsters with tongs and make sure they're aware of how to properly hold a crab.

## 8. ICE YOUR CRABS

As long as they're kept cool and well-ventilated, crabs will live for several hours out of water. Pull the drain plug of your cooler, and keep ice on the crabs until you're ready to boil them. There's an additional benefit: Crabs that have been iced won't eject their claws when they meet the boiling water.

## 9. GO NOW

The months of August, September and October are the absolute best for crabbing along the Louisiana coast. Don't let the opportunity pass you by. ▪

# BEST FALL BASS BAITS

Andy Crawford

## FOCUS ON HIGH-PERCENTAGE TARGETS, PRO SAYS

By Andy Crawford

Fall can be an unnerving time for bass anglers, as the fish seem erratic while transitioning out of summertime patterns. But Gonzales Bassmaster Elite Series pro Gerald Spohrer said that unpredictably is actually a misunderstanding.

"People think fish have gotten lethargic, but that's not the case," Spohrer said. "Basically what you have is fish will gang up, and then they break up and scatter.

"You don't have fish doing this one thing. There are fish in all stages."

The big mistake many anglers make, he said, is to try to catch all these bass. The best route to success during the fall transition is to focus on-the-water efforts.

"I look for groups of fish," Spohrer said. "Instead of trying to fish for them all, I'm looking for groups of fish in the backs of the canals."

That way he isn't jumping from place to place to place chasing different groups of fish with vastly different patterns.

Admittedly, even the bass that are in the canals often will be scattered instead of ganged up on one spot, but Spohrer puts himself in position to spend more time catching those fish by simply ignoring every other possible pattern.

The underlying key to success is to cover as

Bassmaster Elite Series pro Gerald Spohrer of Gonzales turns to several baits during the fall, including (left to right) a Sixth Sense SplashBack popper, a Sixth Sense Dogma, a Delta Lures buzzbait and a Missile Baits D Bomb punching rig.

much of the canal as possible, no matter what lure he's fishing.

Here are his go-to approaches — and the baits he uses — for this time of year:

## PUNCHING

"The vegetation is at it's fullest in the fall," Spohrer said. "(Bass) always relate to it."

So the second-year Elite Series pro ensures he has a punching rig on his deck.

His choice is a Missile Baits D Bomb paired with a Delta Lures punching skirt beneath a ½- to 1 ½-ounce Beast Coast tungsten weight. He uses a 5/0 Strike King Hack Attack hook to ensure solid hookups.

The exact weight of the rig depends on the vegetation mat he's working, choosing a weight that punches through the mat every time so he doesn't have to worry about his lure hanging up.

"I don't really like to think about a slow fall this time of year," Spohrer said. "Fish tend to be more aggressive in the fall. When you find them, they're feeding."

Even though he's punching vegetation, however, doesn't mean he's moving dead slow. In fact, going a little heavier on the weight helps because he can punch, reel in and punch again in short order.

"You still want to cover a lot of water," Spohrer said. "I want to get through the vegetation; it's not as weight critical in the fall.

"To me, it's about efficiency."

## TOPWATER

Everybody loves a good topwater bite, and Spohrer said the fall is when you can use a topwater throughout the day and still get bites. It's just a matter of knowing where bass are more likely to blast a surface lure.

"As the sun gets up, I target shade pockets," he explained.

He uses three topwaters:

- Sixth Sense Dogma walking bait
- Sixth Sense SplashBack popper
- Delta Lures buzzbait

Again, his priority is to cover water.

"The popper is more target specific," Spohrer said. "You can slow down and work over a laydown or log, but it's hard to cover water.

"You really have to stop the boat, but you can still get a big bite."

So when he's not trying to pick a specific piece of cover apart, he trades out the SplashBack for a Dogma.

"I can throw it over a long point and work the entire point quickly," the angler said. "I can cover a lot of water with that walking bait."

And when things get really trashy — say, there's salvinia floating along a bank — he pulls out the buzzbait.

"A buzzbait is really versatile and covers a lot of water," he said. "It seems to be the most efficient."

The only other weapons he adds to his fall arsenal are a Delta spinnerbait and a Sixth Sense square bill.

But no matter what, the angler maintains focus on aggressive bass.

"I really don't try to get finessy with them in the fall," Spohrer said. "It really comes down to covering water and hitting high-percentage targets." ■

After being devoured by speckled trout and redfish, clear-plastic baits like the shrimp creole-colored Matrix Shad on top, can change colors. A fresh new clear bait is shown below.

Todd Masson

# KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON CLEAR PLASTIC BAITS

## LURES CAN APPEAR MILKY AFTER CATCHING A FEW FISH

By Todd Masson

Wise anglers know that garish baits in clear water are about as effective as stopping Alvin Kamara with an arm tackle.

If speckled trout and redfish have no bits of sediment obstructing their view, they'll generally hit only baits that look natural.

In those situations, baits made from clear plastic are really hard to beat. The glitter inside of them shimmers and sparkles, looking much like the iridescent shell of a shrimp. Specks and reds, if they're in the area, just can't resist.

But for anglers, the success of clear-plastic baits can actually work against them.

Once a lure has been clobbered a few times, particularly by the toothy maws of ferocious speckled trout, its surface gets scratched up, and it loses its clear characteristics.

After a few fish, clear baits are more white than they are translucent, and that can make them less attractive to specks and reds.

So the next time you're in clear water, ease your bait down a few inches, and notice how it looks. If the bite slows down, ease the bait in again. If it looks considerably different than it did at the start of the day, change it.

You'll probably be shocked by the results. ■

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SAT, SEP 29 . . . OLE MISS
SAT, OCT 6. . . . @ FLORIDA
SAT, OCT 13. . . GEORGIA
SAT, OCT 20. . . MISSISSIPPI ST.
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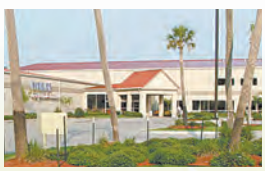

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## OLD CYPRESS OUTDOORS TREE STAND

By Patrick Bonin

If you let bow season sneak up and you're in the market for a brand new lock-on-style tree stand this year, check out these rugged, lightweight stands from Old Cypress Outdoors in Bayou Vista.

They're made in the USA, weigh just 12 pounds and feature an aluminum powder coat finish, an all-weather seat, a 20- by 28-inch platform and come with a block system for safe and easy hanging with two hefty 8-foot ratchet straps with safety pins.

They're made by hunters, so all the bases are covered for safety, adjustability and comfort: Each stand features a three-point seat adjustment, multiple adjustment combinations to fine-tune the level of the platform, and adjustable arms at the base of the 'flat-back' seat that hug the tree for superior side-to-side stability.

And if you've ever struggled with your climbing sticks, Old Cypress employs a unique, silent interlocking system in which the sticks attach directly to the stand for easy backpack-style transport — no ratchet straps necessary.

Old Cypress Outdoor stands sell for $189. Three 30-inch climbing sticks sell for $140, or you can get the Run-N-Gun package which includes three sticks and the stand for just $315. To buy a stand online or get more info, visit **www.oldcypressoutdoors.com**

## LEUPOLD'S VX-FREEDOM

If you want a scope that can stand up to whatever you dish out, then check out the new Leupold VX-Freedom. Does it boast elite optical performance at a price you can't ignore? Of course. Can it help you unleash your rimfire rifle, dominate from any tree stand or tag out from across an open draw? Absolutely. Is it guaranteed to perform for life under the harshest conditions? You bet. No matter the task, the VX-Freedom is up to the challenge. With crisp, clear image resolution, unmatched edge-to-edge clarity and amazing low-light performance, this scope can't be ignored. And like all Leupold riflescopes, the entire VX-Freedom line is designed, machined and assembled right here in the USA with one purpose in mind – to give you the freedom to put a Leupold on any long gun you own, knowing it will perform for a lifetime.

**More Info: www.leupold.com**

## HALO XL600 LASER RANGEFINDER

Never again will I have to guess how far away that gobbler is walking. The XL600 is a compact little tool that fits easily in your hand and doesn't carry a price tag that will knock you out. At 6X power, it's able to range objects out to 600 yards, and it's a must-have for turkey and deer hunters — especially bowhunters who can range objects near their stands long before that big buck arrives. Water resistant, it has AI technology that allows hunters not only to measure flat distances between rifle and target, but also account for the slope of the land. MSRP is $119.99.

**More Info: www.halooptics.com**

New product submissions can be emailed to **Mark Boyd** at **markb@lasmag.com** or call 601-829-8080.

# PLANO'S KAYAK V-CRATE

If tackle storage on your kayak is an issue (and it probably is), then this custom-designed tackle box for your 'yak is definitely worth considering. Plano's V-Crate is designed to sit in the rear cargo compartment of just about any kayak, and its unobtrusive two-piece design securely stores and protects your tackle in a unique V-shape that makes accessing items easy. Each angled tackle storage bay holds two large 3700-size StowAway tackle trays, secured by a quick release rubber strap. And the V-Crate provides ample space for an assortment of larger items in the center module's open bulk storage. Plus, the angled tackle storage bays as well as the center module feature drain holes to eliminate pooling water. The super versatile V-Crate also features a side rail system that allows for easy attachment of accessories, including rod holders. MSRP is $119.99.

**More Info: www.planomolding.com**

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# SCENTLOK OZ ACTIVE-ODOR DESTROYERS

Hunters, especially those that target whitetails, will go to great lengths to try and eliminate or cover their scents, knowing that while they might fool a buck's eyes and ears, they're less likely to fool its nose.

The folks at ScentLok have attacked the problem in recent years by producing clothing and related products to get and keep clothing odors to a minimum. Now, they've gone a step further, with a product to destroy existing odors.

ScentLok's OZ Active Odor-Destroyers are compact deodorizers that push ozone molecules into the air, where they destroy the bacteria and odors with which they come in contact. The Odor-Destroys come in four sizes: OZ20 Vehicle Deodorizer, OZ20B Portable Deodorizer, OZ100 Small Room Deodorizer and OZ500 Large Room Deodorizer.

The OZ20 model, which plugs into a vehicle's cigarette lighter, worked well removing odors from a camper trailer being prepared for sale: the musty, mildew smell was gone overnight. The OZ20B has at least one great use: put it inside a plastic container where hunting clothes are stored to kill odors the night before a hunt. It comes with a rechargeable battery with an 8-hour life, has a USB charging cable and includes a 12-volt DC plug-in.

MSRP for the vehicle deodorizer is $39.99, for the portable deodorizer, $99.99, for the small room model $99.99 and for the large room deodorizer, $149.99.

**More Info: www.scentlok.com**

Brittany Duhon was fishing about 40 to 50 miles out of Pecan Island when this snapper put up quite a fight.

Casey and Natalie Sabido, along with Lauren Shields, had some great summer fun in Grand Isle.

Douglas Mouton killed these ringnecks on Spanish Lake in St. Martin Parish.

## GOT PHOTOS? WE WANT 'EM

Send us your photos, and you may appear on the pages of the most widely read outdoor magazine in the Bayou State. Send clean, sharp shots of you with your fish, deer, ducks, rabbits, squirrels, etc. to **alicial@lasmag.com**

Digital images must be at least 200KB and in jpeg format.

LEFT: Evan Fontenot, 11, killed this big 6-point on Jan. 6 while it was working a scrape in Madison Parish.

BELOW: Jackson Dupree, 9, of Luling, harvested his first deer with a 7mm-08 on Nov. 11, 2017. He was hunting in Vossburg, Mississippi with his Poppa.

Cole Simpson, 8, caught this 22-inch trout at the Fourchon barges with live shrimp under a popping cork May 25 on his first cast of the day.

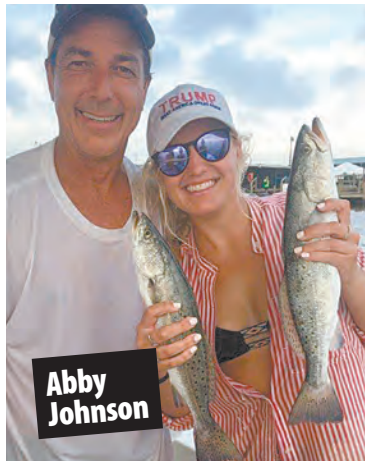
Hunter King with a 5.75-pound speck he caught at the Bridge Side Marina pier in Grand Isle on June 15, 2017.

Cousins Jax Dobernich and Briley Blake after a fun day spent fishing in Cocodrie.

Ben O'Connell, Ken Coleman and Nicholas Lugo with a 125-pound tuna Ken caught fishing out of Venice on June 27.

James Sims killed his first deer, this 190-pound 12-point buck, at Attakapas WMA in St. Martin Parish while hunting with his son, Tyler.

Miles Bowman and his mom Katie with a redfish he caught near Avery Island in Weeks Bay.




Abby Johnson and her dad Pat had a good day fishing in Fourchon back in March of 2017.

Kendall Frederick killed this 9-point (main frame 8) with his bow on Nov. 10, 2017 in Bienville Parish.

Todd M. Fulmer Sr. hooked this 8.7-pound largemouth bass in April 2017 on a topwater Scum Frog Popper at a lake in West Monroe. The fish was measured and released.

Wyatt Suer, 6, of Houma, went on his first duck hunt in Dularge with his father, Gary.

Kelly and Gunner Guillot of Mandeville on a late-season duck hunt in the Pearl River WMA.

Gabriel Andrus and his father Devin pose with Gabriel's first redfish.

Jessie Weigand of Baton Rouge caught this lunker while fishing in Mississippi with her son, Tarek, and mother- in-law, Diane. She released the fish after the photo.

Julia Tavlin was fishing with her uncle, Rodney Monnerjahn, in Cocodrie on July 29 when she caught this black drum.

BELOW: This crew (Noah, Camille, Annie, Nash, Luke, Kyle and Molly) from Metairie had a great day catching bream, bass and a 6-pound channel catfish at Silver Run Lakes in Mississippi.

Evan Anderson knocked down this 135-pound 6-point while hunting with his grandfather, Wayne Folse Sr., on a trip to Gloster, Mississippi on Dec. 28, 2017.

Emily Dyer, 10, pictured with her first deer killed in Morganza on Jan. 20.

Braylon Weigand, 8, of Baton Rouge, caught and released this nice largemouth bass while night-fishing with his Paw at their camp in Mississippi.

# 2018-2019

Not an official document. Refer to LDWF's official hunting regulations pamphlet or www.wlf.louisiana.gov

## HUNTING SEASONS

| SPECIES | SEASON DATES | | BAG LIMIT | POSSESSION LIMIT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (South Zone) | (North Zone) | | |
| **DOVES+** | Sept. 1 - 9<br>Oct. 6 - Nov. 25<br>Dec. 16 - Jan. 14 | Sept. 1 - 23<br>Oct. 6 - Nov. 11<br>Dec. 16 - Jan. 14 | 15 | 45 |
| **WOODCOCK^** | Dec. 18 - Jan. 31 | | 3 | 9 |
| **TEAL** (blue-winged, green-winged, cinnamon) | Sept. 15 - Sept. 30 | | 6 | 18 |
| **RAILS*** | | | | |
| King & Clapper | Sept. 15 - 30 | Nov. 10 - Jan. 2 | 15 | 45 |
| Sora & Virginia | Sept. 15 - 30 | Nov. 10 - Jan. 2 | 25 | 75 |
| **GALLINULES*** | Sept. 15 - 30 | Nov. 10 - Jan. 2 | 15 | 45 |
| **SNIPE** | Nov. 2 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Feb. 28 | | 8 | 24 |
| **QUAIL** | Nov. 17 - Feb. 28 | | 10 | 30 |
| **RABBIT** | Oct. 6 - Feb. 28 | | 8 | 24 |
| **SQUIRREL** | Oct. 6 - Feb. 28<br>May 4 - 26** | | 8<br>3 | 24<br>9 |

*An extended falconry season for ducks, rails and gallinules will take place from Nov. 3 - Jan. 31. ^An extended falconry season for woodcock will be Nov. 2 - Jan. 31. +An extended falconry season for mourning doves will be Sept. 15 - Oct. 1.
**Spring squirrel season is CLOSED on the Kisatchie National Forest, National Wildlife Refuges, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property and some Wildlife Management Areas.

## WATERFOWL SEASONS

| | EAST ZONE | WEST ZONE | COASTAL ZONE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **DUCKS*, COOTS & MERGANSERS** | Nov. 17 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Jan. 27 | Nov. 10 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Jan. 20 | Nov. 10 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Jan. 20 |

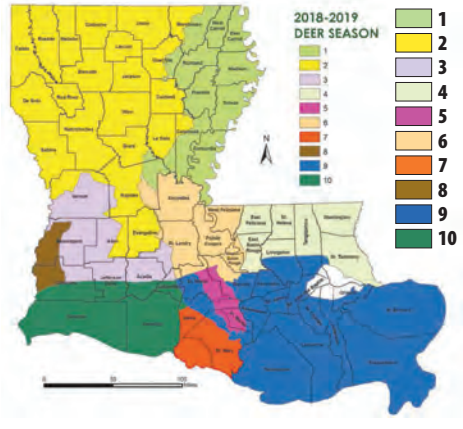
The daily bag limit for ducks is six and may include no more than four mallards (no more than two of which may be females), two canvasback, one mottled duck, one black duck, three wood ducks, three scaups, two redheads and two pintails. Daily bag limit for coots is 15. Daily bag limit for mergansers is five, only two of which may be a hooded mergansers. The merganser limits are in addition to the daily bag limit for ducks. Possession limits for ducks, coots and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit. Youth waterfowl hunts will be held Nov. 3 and Jan. 26 in the West Zone, Nov. 10 and Feb. 2 in the East Zone, and Nov. 3-4 in the Coastal Zone.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **GEESE** (snow, blue, Ross & white-fronted [specklebelly]) | (Statewide)<br>Nov. 3 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Feb. 10 | Daily bag limit for light geese (snow, blue, Ross') is 20, with no possession limit.<br>The daily bag limit for white-fronted geese is two, with a possession limit of six. |
| **CANADA GOOSE SEASON** | (Statewide)<br>Nov. 3 - Dec. 2<br>Dec. 15 - Jan. 31 | The daily limit for Canada geese is one per day, with a possession limit of three. |
| **CONSERVATION ORDER FOR LIGHT GEESE** | (Statewide) Dec. 3 - 14<br>Feb. 11 - March 10 | |

Only snow, blue and Ross geese may be taken under the terms of the conservation order, which allows the use of electronic calls and unplugged shotguns, and eliminates the daily bag and possession limits. Shooting hours begin one-half hour before sunrise and extends until one-half hour after sunset.

## DEER SEASONS

### 2018 - 2019 Deer Hunting Areas




| AREA | ARCHERY (Either-sex) | PRIMITIVE FIREARMS (All either-sex, except as noted) | STILL HUNT (No dogs allowed) (All either-sex, except as noted) | WITH/WITHOUT DOGS (All either-sex, except as noted) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Oct. 1 - Jan. 31 | Nov. 10 -16<br>Jan. 21 - 31 | Nov. 17 - Dec. 7<br>Jan. 7 - 20 | Dec. 8 - Jan. 6 |
| 2 | Oct. 1 - Jan. 31 | Oct. 20 - 26<br>Jan. 14 - 20 | Oct. 27 - Dec. 5 | Dec. 6 - Jan. 13 |
| 3 | Sept. 15 - Jan. 15 | Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30 | Oct. 20 - Nov. 25 | Dec. 1 - Jan. 6 (certain areas) |
| 4 | Oct. 1 - Jan. 31 | Nov. 10 - 16<br>Jan. 21 - 31 | Nov. 17 - Dec. 7<br>Jan. 7 - 20 | Dec. 8 - Jan. 6 |
| 5 | Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only)<br>Oct. 16 - Feb. 15(either-sex) | Nov. 10-16 (either-sex)<br>Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only) | Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex)<br>Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only) | Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex)<br>Dec. 10-21 (bucks only)<br>Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (bucks only) |
| 6 | Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only)<br>Oct. 16 - Feb. 15(either-sex) | Nov. 10 - 16<br>Jan. 21 - 31 | Nov. 17 - Dec. 7 | Dec. 8 - Jan. 20 |
| 7 | Sept. 15 - Jan. 15 | Oct. 13 - 19<br>Nov. 3 - 9 | Oct. 20 - Nov. 2<br>Nov. 10 - 25 | Nov. 26 - Dec. 30 |
| 8 | Sept. 15 - Jan. 15 | Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30 | Oct. 20 - Nov. 25 | Dec. 1 - Jan. 6 |
| 9 | Oct. 1 - 15 (bucks only)<br>Oct. 16 - Feb. 15 (either-sex) | Nov. 10-16 (either-sex)<br>Jan. 21 - 31 (bucks only) | Nov. 17-18, Nov. 23 - 25 (either-sex)<br>Nov. 19-22, Nov. 26 - Dec. 7 (bucks only) | Dec. 8-9, Dec. 22-23 (either-sex)<br>Dec. 10-21 (bucks only)<br>Dec. 24 - Jan. 20 (bucks only) |
| 10 | Sept. 15 - Jan. 15 | Oct. 13 - 19, Nov. 26 - 30 | Oct. 20 - Nov. 25, Dec. 1 - Jan. 6 | |

# October 2018

| Date | Sunrise | Sunset |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | 6:54 a.m. | 6:46 p.m. |
| 2nd | 6:54 a.m. | 6:44 p.m. |
| 3rd | 6:55 a.m. | 6:43 p.m. |
| 4th | 6:55 a.m. | 6:42 p.m. |
| 5th | 6:56 a.m. | 6:41 p.m. |
| 6th | 6:57 a.m. | 6:40 p.m. |
| 7th | 6:57 a.m. | 6:39 p.m. |
| 8th | 6:58 a.m. | 6:37 p.m. |
| 9th | 6:58 a.m. | 6:36 p.m. |
| 10th | 6:59 a.m. | 6:35 p.m. |
| 11th | 7:00 a.m. | 6:34 p.m. |
| 12th | 7:00 a.m. | 6:33 p.m. |
| 13th | 7:01 a.m. | 6:32 p.m. |
| 14th | 7:02 a.m. | 6:31 p.m. |
| 15th | 7:02 a.m. | 6:29 p.m. |
| 16th | 7:03 a.m. | 6:28 p.m. |
| 17th | 7:04 a.m. | 6:27 p.m. |
| 18th | 7:04 a.m. | 6:26 p.m. |
| 19th | 7:05 a.m. | 6:25 p.m. |
| 20th | 7:06 a.m. | 6:24 p.m. |
| 21st | 7:06 a.m. | 6:23 p.m. |
| 22nd | 7:07 a.m. | 6:22 p.m. |
| 23rd | 7:08 a.m. | 6:21 p.m. |
| 24th | 7:08 a.m. | 6:20 p.m. |
| 25th | 7:09 a.m. | 6:19 p.m. |
| 26th | 7:10 a.m. | 6:18 p.m. |
| 27th | 7:10 a.m. | 6:17 p.m. |
| 28th | 7:11 a.m. | 6:17 p.m. |
| 29th | 7:12 a.m. | 6:16 p.m. |
| 30th | 7:13 a.m. | 6:15 p.m. |
| 31st | 7:13 a.m. | 6:14 p.m. |

*Time based on New Orleans, sunrise/sunset; source U.S. Naval Observatory. Corrections (in minutes)

| Alexandria | Baton Rouge | Lafayette | Lake Charles | Monroe | Shreveport |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rise/Set | Rise/Set | Rise/Set | Rise/Set | Rise/Set | Rise/Set |
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**Astro Tables** is far more effective than "moon tables," because it takes into account critical solar energies as well as lunar.

• The "Best Days" column is based on the ever-changing positions of the sun and the moon, rating each day on a scale of 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more solar/lunar influence that day is experiencing (see "Value" column or corresponding black bars).

• The two Primary periods (Moon Overhead and Moon Underfoot) vary in length from one hour to three-and-one-half hours, depending on a number of important lunar cycles, such as how close the moon is to the earth that day and how high its orbit is. The solar symbols alert you to when a Primary period overlaps a major solar period (eg: Dawn, High-Noon, and Dusk). The secondary periods of Moonrise and Moonset last about one hour each . . . 30 minutes before and after the listed time. (See key at bottom of each month for more detail.)

• **Astro Tables** is a quick-reference version of its parent publication, the **PrimeTimes Wall Calendar**, which is recommended for those wishing more complete data on the best days and times to go fishing and hunting for the entire year (see "Available Products" below).

• **PrimeTimes'** forecasts are based on solar/lunar research at a leading college of astrophysics and our own research pond/wildlife area. Annual data is supplied by the U.S. Naval Observatory. All times are adjusted to the center of your time zone and for Daylight Saving Time.

**AVAILABLE PRODUCTS:**

***The 2018 PrimeTimes Wall Calendar.*** **$12.95** (plus $4 s&h). Know the best days, best times, and their relative strengths for all of 2018 with this information-packed, full-color, 11-inch by 17-inch, graphic peaks-and-valleys forecaster. Includes rise and set times for the sun and moon, space to log your catches, "Timely Tips," plus fish and game symbols showing you each month's don't-miss periods. Also includes exclusive summary charts revealing the best and worst days of 2018, the year's best periods, a look ahead at 2019, and more. Comes with FREE 2018 Astro Tables pocket calendar, which sells separately for $7.95, plus $3 s&h.

**Book:** ***"How to Know When to Go" by Rick Taylor.*** **$14.95** (plus $4 s&h). 100 pages, 43 illustrations. A comprehensive look at the main factors influencing fish and game activity periods, plus how to devise an effective when-to-go game plan using any year's PrimeTimes calendars. Individual assessments of bass, panfish, deer, turkey, and more.

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## 2018 OCT

**BEST DAYS** — POOR / FAIR / GOOD / EXCL — VALUE

**LUNAR PERIODS** — TIMES OCCURRING AT NIGHT ARE SHADED

| | BEST DAYS | MOON RISE | PRIMARY MOON OVERHEAD | MOON SET | PRIMARY MOON UNDERFOOT | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mon 1 | 53 | 11:54 pm | 4:34 am - 7:56 am | 1:32 pm | 4:59 pm - 8:21 pm | HIGH |
| Tue 2 | 64 | | 5:30 am - 8:56 am | 2:31 pm | 5:55 pm - 9:21 pm | HALF |
| Wed 3 | 54 | 12:54 am | 6:31 am - 9:53 am | 3:26 pm | 6:56 pm - 10:18 pm | |
| Thu 4 | 49 | 1:58 am | 7:32 am - 10:48 am | 4:16 pm | 7:57 pm - 11:13 pm | |
| Fri 5 | 58 | 3:06 am | 8:36 am - 11:38 am | 5:01 pm | 9:01 pm - 12:03 am | Perigee |
| Sat 6 | 65 | 4:14 am | 9:37 am - 12:27 pm | 5:42 pm | 10:02 pm - 12:52 am | |
| Sun 7 | 71 | 5:22 am | 10:39 am - 1:11 pm | 6:20 pm | 11:04 pm - Midnight | |
| Mon 8 | 72 | 6:30 am | 11:40 am - 1:52 pm | 6:56 pm | Midnight - 1:36 am | NEW |
| Tue 9 | 58 | 7:35 am | 12:39 pm - 2:35 pm | 7:31 pm | 12:05 am - 2:17 am | |
| Wed 10 | 44 | 8:40 am | 1:38 pm - 3:16 pm | 8:07 pm | 1:04 am - 3:00 am | |
| Thu 11 | 31 | 9:43 am | 2:33 pm - 3:59 pm | 8:44 pm | 2:03 am - 3:41 am | |
| Fri 12 | 24 | 10:44 am | 3:28 pm - 4:44 pm | 9:24 pm | 2:58 am - 4:24 am | |
| Sat 13 | 21 | 11:42 am | 4:23 pm - 5:29 pm | 10:07 pm | 3:53 am - 5:09 am | |
| Sun 14 | 20 | 12:37 pm | 5:15 pm - 6:17 pm | 10:53 pm | 4:48 am - 5:54 am | LOW |
| Mon 15 | 24 | 1:28 pm | 6:04 pm - 7:06 pm | 11:42 pm | 5:40 am - 6:42 am | |
| Tue 16 | 32 | 2:15 pm | 6:51 pm - 7:57 pm | | 6:29 am - 7:31 am | HALF |
| Wed 17 | 22 | 2:58 pm | 7:37 pm - 8:45 pm | 12:34 am | 7:16 am - 8:22 am | Apogee |
| Thu 18 | 17 | 3:36 pm | 8:18 pm - 9:36 pm | 1:27 am | 8:02 am - 9:10 am | |
| Fri 19 | 20 | 4:12 pm | 8:58 pm - 10:26 pm | 2:22 am | 8:43 am - 10:01 am | |
| Sat 20 | 23 | 4:45 pm | 9:36 pm - 11:18 pm | 3:18 am | 9:23 am - 10:51 am | |
| Sun 21 | 36 | 5:17 pm | 10:12 pm - 12:10 am | 4:15 am | 10:01 am - 11:43 am | |
| Mon 22 | 49 | 5:48 pm | 10:50 pm - 1:02 am | 5:12 am | 10:37 am - 12:35 pm | |
| Tue 23 | 61 | 6:20 pm | 11:27 pm - Midnight | 6:11 am | 11:15 am - 1:27 pm | |
| Wed 24 | 68 | 6:54 pm | Midnight - 1:57 am | 7:12 am | 11:52 am - 2:22 pm | FULL |
| Thu 25 | 61 | 7:30 pm | 12:07 am - 2:53 am | 8:14 am | 12:32 pm - 3:18 pm | |
| Fri 26 | 54 | 8:11 pm | 12:51 am - 3:51 am | 9:18 am | 1:16 pm - 4:16 pm | |
| Sat 27 | 48 | 8:57 pm | 1:38 am - 4:50 am | 10:23 am | 2:03 pm - 5:15 pm | |
| Sun 28 | 45 | 9:49 pm | 2:30 am - 5:50 am | 11:27 am | 2:55 pm - 6:15 pm | |
| Mon 29 | 47 | 10:47 pm | 3:25 am - 6:51 am | 12:28 pm | 3:50 pm - 7:16 pm | HIGH |
| Tue 30 | 51 | 11:50 pm | 4:26 am - 7:48 am | 1:24 pm | 4:51 pm - 8:13 pm | |
| Wed 31 | 62 | | 5:25 am - 8:45 am | 2:15 pm | 5:50 pm - 9:10 pm | HALF & PERIGEE |

25 50 75 AVERAGE

ANY LUNAR PERIOD IS ENHANCED WHEN IT OVERLAPS A KEY SOLAR PERIOD. THE BEST OF THESE OVERLAPS ARE DESIGNATED BY THE SUN SYMBOLS: = DAWN = HIGH NOON = DUSK

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# FINAL LEADERBOARD RESULTS

**Speckled Trout EAST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Ed Sexton | 6.82lbs. | Port Fourchon Marina |
| 2. Royden J. Lynch Jr. | 6.60 lbs. | Venice Marina |
| 3. Tony Bruce | 6.10 lbs. | Port Fourchon Marina |

**Speckled Trout SOUTHEAST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Taylor Veazey | 6.68 lbs. | Sand Dollar Marina |
| 2. Warren Steve Dufore | 5.74 lbs. | Bridge Side Marina |
| 3. Scott Michael Rauch | 5.68 lbs. | Bridge Side Marina |

**Speckled Trout SOUTHWEST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Dave G. Broussard | 6.15 lbs. | Don's Boat Landing |
| 2. Kenneth Laborde | 4.12 lbs. | Dago's |
| 3. Harold Schoeffler Jr. | 4.00 lbs. | Dago's |

**Speckled Trout WEST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Billy Boswell | 7.50 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 2. Mike Crisafulli | 5.87 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |
| 3. Harry P. Jenkins | 5.85 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |

**Flounder**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Joey Harris | 6.50 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 2. Joey Carnahan | 5.42 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 3. Joey Carnahan | 4.58 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |

**Mangrove Snapper**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Aaron Breaux | 11.74 lbs. | Bayou Adventure |
| 2. Nicholas Berger | 11.24 lbs. | Bridge Side Marina |
| 3. Griff Whiteside | 11.22 lbs. | Port Fourchon Marina |

**Cobia**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Travis Callais | 56.70 lbs. | Port Fourchon Marina |
| 2. Bruce J. White | 53.76 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 3. Joey Comeaux | 52.05 lbs. | Maxie Pierce Grocery |

**Dorado**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Ross Sampey | 42.98 lbs | Sand Dollar Marina |
| 2. Donna Joffrion | 25.10 lbs. | Cypress Cove Marina |
| 3. Ross Sampey | 21.24 lbs. | Sand Dollar Marina |

**Red Snapper**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Robert Garrison | 29.00 lbs. | Venice Marina |
| 2. Christopher Brady | 25.58 lbs. | Sand Dollar Marina |
| 3. Eliot Labbe | 24.24 lbs. | Bridge Side Marina |

**Fly EAST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Rudy Hall | 3.26 lbs. | Cypress Cove Marina |
| 2. Rudy Hall | 2.97 lbs. | Cypress Cove Marina |
| 3. Roger del Rio | 1.18 lbs. | Bridge Side Marina |

**Fly WEST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Bruce White | 4.14 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |

**Ladies' Only Speckled Trout – EAST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. JoAnn Vidrine | 5.24 lbs. | Bridge Side Marina |
| 2. Martha Grunewald | 4.75 lbs | Port Fourchon Marina |
| 3. Julie Fox | 4.48 lbs. | Tradewinds Marina |

**Ladies' Only Speckled Trout – WEST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Leah Logan | 4.08 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 2. Leah Logan | 4.06 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 3. Nanette Hulin | 3.98 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |

**Kayak EAST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Jared Heider | 3.96 lbs | Hopedale Marina |
| 2. Donald Gibert | 1.99 lbs. | Hopedale Marina |
| 3. Chris Suchand | 1.01 lbs. | Rigolets Bait and Seafood |

**Tagged Redfish**
Bryan Dorsey
2018 Chevy Silverado

**Tagged Redfish**
Gary Kinler
2140 Sport NauticStar package

**Tagged Redfish**
Ty Trosclair
2140 Sport NauticStar package

**Kayak SOUTHEAST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Jonathan Vannoy | 5.63 lbs. | Port Fourchon Marina |
| 2. Jonathan Vannoy | 3.28 lbs. | Bridge Side Marina |
| 3. David Torregrossa | 3.24 lbs. | Gail's Bait Shop |

**Kayak SOUTHWEST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Matthew J. Broussard | 3.21 lbs. | Dago's |
| 2. Shane Johnson | 2.76 lbs. | Dago's |
| 3. Scotty O. Broussard | 2.72 lbs. | Dago's |

**Kayak WEST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Eric Chavers | 4.54 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 2. Scott Bienvenu | 3.73 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |
| 3. Wayne Lobb | 3.70 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |

**Sheepshead East**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Angie Stewart | 8.31 lbs. | Lake Catherine Island Marina |
| 2. Andrew Roberts | 7.98 lbs. | Sand Dollar Marina |
| 3. Chas Champagne | 7.96 lbs. | Rigolet's Bait & Seafood |

**Sheepshead WEST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Tom Gurley | 7.59 lbs | Calcasieu Point Landing |
| 2. Steve Lewellan | 6.80 lbs. | Joe's Landing |
| 3. Danny Lanza | 5.87 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |

**Calcasieu Calcutta**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Michael Fesco | 4.46 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |
| 2. Jason Ellender | 4.40 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |
| 3. Daniel Compagno | 4.20 lbs. | Calcasieu Point Landing |

**Bank Fishing**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Donald R. Davis | 6.88 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 2. Eric Chavers | 5.39 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |
| 3. Donald R. Davis | 4.87 lbs. | Cajun Fast Mart |

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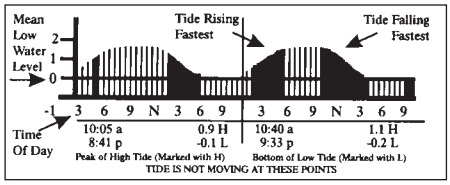


Fish feed most actively when the tide is moving. Louisiana Sportsman has made it simple to spot the most-active feeding periods each day in the Tide Guide. Just fish those times indicated in black. To find the best time to fish your favorite honeyhole, find the spot under Tide Corrections that is closest to the area, and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

## Tide Corrections

| East Point, Grand Isle | HIGH | LOW |
|---|---|---|
| Barataria Pass | +1:00 | -0:10 |
| Bastian Island | +0:41 | +0:12 |
| Bay Gardene | +2:51 | +2:44 |
| Bayou BonFouca | +9:59 | +10:11 |
| Breton Islands | +0:54 | +0:48 |
| Caillou Boca | +0:40 | +0:48 |
| Caminada Pass | +0:20 | +0:12 |
| Chandeleur Light | +0:37 | +0:34 |
| Chef Pass | +5:17 | +5:07 |
| Cocodrie | +1:22 | +1:33 |
| Comfort Island | +1:34 | +0:54 |
| Delacroix Island | +3:42 | +3:31 |
| Empire Jetty | -1:03 | -1:45 |
| Four Bayou Pass | +2:18 | +0:17 |
| Gardner Island | +0:40 | +0:47 |
| Grand Pass | +1:48 | +1:16 |
| Head of Passes | -0:48 | +0:00 |
| Hopedale | +4:17 | +4:56 |
| Independence Island | +2:29 | +1:59 |
| Jack Bay | +1:59 | +1:28 |
| Joseph Bayou | -0:36 | -1:37 |
| Lafitte | +1:45 | +2:51 |
| Long Point, Lake Borgne | +2:28 | +2:11 |
| Manila Village | +2:32 | +3:13 |
| Michoud Substation | +5:24 | +5:02 |
| New Canal (Bucktown) | +10:34 | +10:49 |
| North Pass | -0:31 | -0:37 |
| Paris Road Bridge | +5:53 | +5:58 |
| Pelican Islands | +2:26 | +2:26 |
| Pointe a la Hache | +3:12 | +3:01 |
| Port Eads | -0:17 | -1:37 |
| Raccoon Point | -0:03 | -0:20 |
| Shell Beach | +4:32 | +4:25 |
| Ship Shoal Light | -1:54 | -1:50 |
| South Pass, Miss. R. | -1:13 | -1:20 |
| Southwest Pass, Miss. R. | -0:38 | -1:33 |
| Tchefuncte River | +10:23 | +11:01 |
| Timbalier Island | +0:19 | +0:23 |
| Wine Island | +1:08 | +1:02 |

| Calcasieu Pass, Lighthouse Wharf | HIGH | LOW |
|---|---|---|
| Cote Blanche Island | +4:33 | +3:40 |
| Eugene Island | +1:49 | -0:39 |
| Lighthouse Point | +0:58 | -0:53 |
| Mermentau River ent. | +0:20 | +0:25 |
| Point Au Fer | +1:53 | -1:02 |
| Point Chevreul | +3:16 | +0:30 |
| Rabbit Island | +2:01 | -0:36 |
| Shell Island | +3:08 | +0:45 |
| South Point | +1:55 | -0:33 |
| Southwest Pass, Vermillion Bay | +1:42 | +0:51 |
| Weeks Bay | +3:58 | +3:56 |

## East Point Grand Isle

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1<br>2:07 am 1.5 H<br>1:54 pm 0.3 L | 2 LQ<br>3:08 am 1.6 H<br>3:03 pm 0.3 L | 3<br>4:19 am 1.6 H<br>4:06 pm 0.3 L | 4<br>5:40 am 1.5 H<br>5:02 pm 0.3 L | 5<br>7:13 am 1.4 H<br>5:53 pm 0.4 L | 6<br>8:52 am 1.3 H<br>6:36 pm 0.6 L |
| 7<br>10:38 am 1.2 H<br>7:04 pm 0.8 L | 8 NM<br>12:35 am 0.9 H<br>5:05 am 0.8 L<br>12:45 pm 1.1 H<br>6:49 pm 0.9 L | 9<br>6:58 am 0.7 L<br>10:45 pm 1.2 H | 10<br>8:20 am 0.6 L<br>11:03 pm 1.3 H | 11<br>9:31 am 0.5 L<br>11:35 pm 1.4 H | 12<br>10:37 am 0.4 L | 13<br>12:13 am 1.5 H<br>11:42 am 0.4 L |
| 14<br>12:55 am 1.5 H<br>12:45 pm 0.4 L | 15<br>1:40 am 1.5 H<br>1:46 pm 0.4 L | 16 FQ<br>2:29 am 1.4 H<br>2:42 pm 0.4 L | 17<br>3:23 am 1.4 H<br>3:31 pm 0.4 L | 18<br>4:23 am 1.3 H<br>4:12 pm 0.5 L | 19<br>5:34 am 1.2 H<br>4:45 pm 0.6 L | 20<br>7:04 am 1.1 H<br>5:05 pm 0.6 L |
| 21<br>8:53 am 1.0 H<br>5:06 pm 0.7 L<br>11:34 pm 0.9 H | 22<br>4:47 am 0.8 L<br>11:00 am 0.9 H<br>4:31 pm 0.8 L<br>10:26 pm 1.0 H | 23<br>6:07 am 0.7 L<br>10:07 pm 1.1 H | 24 FM<br>7:08 am 0.6 L<br>10:16 pm 1.2 H | 25<br>8:05 am 0.4 L<br>10:40 pm 1.3 H | 26<br>9:03 am 0.3 L<br>11:14 pm 1.4 H | 27<br>10:06 am 0.2 L<br>11:55 pm 1.5 H |
| 28<br>11:12 am 0.1 L | 29<br>12:43 am 1.5 H<br>12:20 pm 0.1 L | 30<br>1:35 am 1.5 H<br>1:27 pm 0.1 L | 31 LQ<br>2:32 am 1.5 H<br>2:28 pm 0.2 L | | | |

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## Calcasieu Pass Lighthouse Wharf

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1<br>1:50 am 2.0 L<br>5:12 am 2.1 H<br>2:26 pm 0.4 L<br>11:13 pm 2.3 H | 2 LQ<br>3:35 pm 0.4 L | 3<br>12:27 am 2.3 H<br>5:40 am 2.0 L<br>7:58 am 2.0 L<br>4:41 pm 0.3 L | 4<br>1:13 am 2.3 H<br>6:21 am 1.9 L<br>9:47 am 2.0 H<br>5:47 pm 0.4 L | 5<br>1:46 am 2.3 H<br>6:58 am 1.7 L<br>11:17 am 2.1 H<br>6:50 pm 0.4 L | 6<br>2:11 am 2.3 H<br>7:36 am 1.4 L<br>12:45 pm 2.2 H<br>7:47 pm 0.5 L |
| 7<br>2:30 am 2.2 H<br>8:15 am 1.2 L<br>1:56 pm 2.3 H<br>8:39 pm 0.7 L | 8 NM<br>2:47 am 2.2 H<br>8:55 am 0.9 L<br>3:00 pm 2.3 H<br>9:28 pm 0.9 L | 9<br>3:05 am 2.2 H<br>9:36 am 0.7 L<br>4:08 pm 2.3 H<br>10:17 pm 1.2 L | 10<br>3:27 am 2.2 H<br>10:18 am 0.5 L<br>5:15 pm 2.3 H<br>11:05 pm 1.4 L | 11<br>3:53 am 2.1 H<br>10:59 am 0.4 L<br>6:19 pm 2.3 H<br>11:52 pm 1.6 L | 12<br>4:19 am 2.1 H<br>11:40 am 0.4 L<br>7:34 pm 2.2 H | 13<br>12:45 am 1.8 L<br>4:45 am 2.0 H<br>12:23 pm 0.4 L<br>9:08 pm 2.2 H |
| 14<br>1:11 pm 0.5 L<br>10:31 pm 2.2 H | 15<br>2:11 pm 0.6 L<br>11:54 pm 2.2 H | 16 FQ<br>3:17 pm 0.7 L | 17<br>12:49 am 2.2 H<br>4:20 pm 0.8 L | 18<br>1:17 am 2.1 H<br>7:18 am 1.6 L<br>10:13 am 1.8 H<br>5:18 pm 0.8 L | 19<br>1:33 am 2.1 H<br>7:32 am 1.5 L<br>11:33 am 1.8 H<br>6:14 pm 0.9 L | 20<br>1:45 am 2.1 H<br>7:44 am 1.4 L<br>12:44 pm 1.9 H<br>7:02 pm 1.0 L |
| 21<br>1:52 am 2.1 H<br>7:58 am 1.2 L<br>1:35 pm 2.0 H<br>7:43 pm 1.0 L | 22<br>1:59 am 2.1 H<br>8:18 am 1.0 L<br>2:18 pm 2.1 H<br>8:20 pm 1.1 L | 23<br>2:09 am 2.1 H<br>8:45 am 0.8 L<br>3:01 pm 2.1 H<br>8:58 pm 1.2 L | 24 FM<br>2:23 am 2.1 H<br>9:17 am 0.6 L<br>3:47 pm 2.2 H<br>9:37 pm 1.4 L | 25<br>2:39 am 2.1 H<br>9:53 am 0.4 L<br>4:39 pm 2.3 H<br>10:18 pm 1.5 L | 26<br>2:56 am 2.1 H<br>10:32 am 0.2 L<br>5:34 pm 2.3 H<br>11:00 pm 1.7 L | 27<br>3:14 am 2.1 H<br>11:14 am 0.1 L<br>6:34 pm 2.3 H<br>11:43 pm 1.8 L |
| 28<br>3:33 am 2.1 H<br>12:01 pm 0.1 L<br>8:01 pm 2.3 H | 29<br>12:33 am 1.9 L<br>3:54 am 2.1 H<br>12:54 pm 0.1 L<br>9:36 pm 2.3 H | 30<br>2:00 am 2.0 L<br>4:20 am 2.0 L<br>1:58 pm 0.2 L<br>10:47 pm 2.3 H | 31 LQ<br>3:11 pm 0.3 L<br>11:45 pm 2.2 H | | | |

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Capt. Lane Zimmer likes to fish the edges of grass beds for October specks out of Lafitte.

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FISHING HOTSPOTS

# DON'T DISMISS LAFITTE

## Above-average trout will be moving inside this month

Lafitte is commonly known for relatively small trout — but this fall could be quite different, according to Capt. Lane Zimmer. He said a tough year last year could benefit the area this autumn, which means anglers will spend more time throwing speckled trout in their ice chest than on the measuring stick.

"We had such a lousy spring that I'm hoping all those trout that didn't get caught in the spring had time to grow up and get nice and fat," he said. "We ought to have some decent-sized trout this year."

The trick to finding fish this month is knowing how far inside the fish have come. October speckled trout are, for the most part, constantly changing locations because of their annual migration to inside waters.

"Usually I tell everybody the second good cold front that comes through, the fish generally make their way all the way inside," Zimmer said.

He usually focuses on major lakes this time of year.

"I'll look for diving birds in the big lakes, like Little Lake and Bay Round," he said.

Zimmer said when he doesn't see birds diving, he fishes around vegetation in the lakes.

"I like to work the edges of the big grass beds. Usually there's some trout moving around them even if there's no birds diving," he said. "You just get on the edge of where the grass gets thickest and work along it."

Zimmer fishes with Ghost Minnows under a popping cork, and if the grass isn't too thick, he tight-lines with ¼-ounce jigheads.

One important element to look for, Zimmer said, is good water clarity.

"If those hard fronts come down and blow hard, it's going to muddy up a lot of water," he said. "I'm mainly looking for clear water. If the tide's moving, that's best, but I don't want to fish good tidal water that looks like mud." ▪

- Joel Masson

## GOT PICS?

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Homer Humphreys, left, and a happy client with a chunky Lake Bistineau bass.

# FOLLOW THE WATER FOR BISTINEAU LARGEMOUTHS

When bass anglers approach a lake they haven't fished in a while, their first question usually has something to do with what the fish are hitting.

But at 16,000-acre Lake Bistineau in Northwest Louisiana, the question in recent years has been, "Where's the water?"

That's because numerous drawdowns to control giant salvinia have kept this lake in a state of flux. True to form, this fall the lake is in the process of going down again — this time possibly as far as 7 feet below pool. A huge floating boom has been placed across a big section of the lake to hold back the noxious floating weeds, but longtime pro angler and lake guide Homer Humphreys said it's positioned where you can idle over it to get into some great shallow water fishing areas, as well as the rest of the lake.

So where do you fish?

"Follow the water," Humphreys said. "You have to move with the fish as the water falls. The drawdowns are doing a lot of good and it's helping fishing. This month it will be on like a chicken bone. Just adapt to the conditions."

Humphreys said the good thing about lower water levels is it increases the odds for fishermen — more fish in less water.

Frankly, he said, you can catch fish from one end of the lake to the other and most of them won't be too far away from the deeper water of the channel.

"But they aren't deep," he said. "We'll catch them in 2 to 4 feet of water all the way through the winter. One of the best spots of all to look for fish is on the point trees along the main channel or sloughs."

So what are they hitting?

"Shad-like crankbaits such as Strike King's Red Eye and the Rat-L-Trap in chrome and blue. The shad are balling up and will continue to group up even more as it gets cooler," he said. "Reel them as fast as you can because it's a reaction strike. Big ones are also starting to hit big plastics like the penetration color Sweet Beaver 4.2 and bayou special color Missile Bait. Pack some Zoom Ol' Monster worms in South African special, black emerald and candy bug."

Access is limited. Port O Bistineau is shallow, but can be used. The landing at Grice Road by the dam is good, as is the public ramp on the Bossier side. If you are going to any other lakes, make sure to wash off your boat trailer and flush your outboard to help prevent the spread of salvinia. ■

- Kinny Haddox

# GOLDEN MEADOW IS GOLDEN IN OCTOBER

## Target specks and reds in the bays

"Hooray for October," my old friend Capt. T-Man Cheramie (985-677-6294) said. "The biggest threat of tropical storms has passed, the weather is cooler, the humidity is lower and the fish are on the prowl."

T-Man has fished the Sulfur Mine area for 50 years ,and this month he starts focusing on the deeper ponds that surround it for marauding reds and hungry specks.

"The news is mostly all good," he said. "The trout and redfish are hungry, and the numbers and sizes are real good. They'll hit gold spoons, soft plastics, topwater baits, and of course, live shrimp and minnows. And a new bait shop opened up in the old gas station in front of Basson's Launch, so that's an added bonus."

The only issue T-Man cautions anglers about is the dredging going on all around the mine.

"They're filling in some areas and dredging out others, so just be cautious and aware when you run," he said.

Otherwise, he suggested fishing the mouths of the bayous in the big lakes and bays for specks, but don't be surprised to find reds in the mix. Try live bait or soft plastics under a cork fished around Lake Raccourci, Lake Chein, Lake Felicity and Little Lake, he said.

Cheramie's favorite tactic is to toss topwater baits in the early mornings, on overcast days or late evenings off points with current — and wait for the explosion.

continues >

**Golden Meadow** continued

"Reds and big trout will slam dunk your Top Dog Jr. or She Dogs, and nothing is as exciting as topwater action," he said. "Right now through November is prime time for the topwater bite."

To increase your chances for a great day on the water, choose to fish days with less wind, and look for signs of bait in the water or birds diving on the surface. Don't pass up the birds, he said.

Capt. T-Man Cheramie

"If you specifically want to target reds then try any of the deeper ponds around the big lakes or around the Sulfur Mine," he said. "Just soak a live minnow or dead shrimp under a cork tossed up near a point or cut or cove. Give it a few pops and wait a couple minutes, and they'll find it." ▪

- Rusty Tardo

# HENDERSON LAKE FOR SAC-A-LAIT

## Drawdown slated to end on Oct. 31

It's easy to find the prime fishing spot to catch bass and sac-a-lait in October at Henderson Lake.

Just head for the canal paralleling Interstate 10 that intersects the middle of the lake east to west in St. Martin Parish. Really, after a drawdown lowered the lake level starting in August, there is far less room to roam with adequate water depth favorable for gamefish.

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Inland Fisheries Division called for the drawdown to combat the spread of newly discovered giant salvinia, along with the ever-present water hyacinth and hydrilla. The 'flats' north and south of the interstate have been exposed to air and sunlight.

Field reports indicate there is grass — not underwater vegetation — growing on the south flats in front of the private boat landings, and water lilies have all but disappeared.

The lake is 3 feet below normal pool, according to the LDWF, so state officials are asking boaters to use caution in the area.

There is one more month left for the scheduled drawdown — October. On Nov. 1, LDWF plans to close the water control structure at the lower end of the lake to return the level to pool stage, just in time for duck hunting.

Until then, most of the larger boats still will be launching only at Atchafalaya Basin Landing & Marina, a private boat launch along the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee near Henderson. Small boats have been able to launch

Elize Cormier, left, and Jude Mequet hold winning fish from the Take Dat sac-a-lait tournament this year out of Cypress Cove Landing at Henderson Lake. Sacs can be caught in the canal along I-10 and at the railroad pilings in October.

at Cypress Cove Landing, also along the levee, according to Laurette Mequet, who along with her husband, Mitch, own Cypress Cove Landing and Houseboat Adventures.

The I-10 public boat landing at the Butte La Rose exit has been closed because of low water, Mequet said. She wholeheartedly believes the drawdown, which is an inconvenience for many, is effective.

Bass fishing should be fair to good, mostly in front of drains along the deep canal that parallels I-10, Mequet said. Chartreuse/white spinnerbaits, mostly ¼-ounce models, and shallow-diving chrome/blue and chrome/black crankbaits and lipless crankbaits, like Rat-L-Traps, will account for most bass in October.

For sac-a-lait, fish along the interstate as well as at the railroad pilings just north of I-10. Sac-a-lait fishing success has been fair since the late summer drawdown, Mequet said, noting it should improve as the water cools.

She expects many of the slabs to be caught on hair jigs or tube jigs and some on shiners. For the artificials, she recommends either red/olive/chartreuse or red/black/chartreuse, with ¼-ounce being her favorite.

She recommended fishing 6 to 8 feet deep for the sac-a-lait.

To get to I-10 from Basin Landing and Cypress Cove Landing, boaters must head south along The Boulevard until they reach the canal at the end of Lake Bigeaux, then turn and head east to Lake Pelba. At Lake Pelba, head north to I-10. ▪

- Don Shoopman

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# BUMP-AND-RUN FOR CLAIBORNE'S BASS

Lunkers like this are fall targets when Jarred Fitch plays bum-and-run with Claiborne bass.

It's football season and many good defensive backs rely on the bump and run when they are trying to slow down the other team's receiver. With the bump-and-run, the DB bumps the receiver to throw him off his game.

It's the same technique that West Monroe's Jarred Fitch likes to use when he's fishing for Lake Claiborne bass in October.

"You definitely need to tie on a squarebill crankbait and find some wood. It can be stumps, boat docks or trash piles," he said. "Throw the bait out past the structure and reel it back and bump right into the side of the cover. Bumping the wood with the bait is the key. It will throw the fish off their game and they'll nail it just out of instinct. You'll be amazed how many bass you catch that way."

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He also likes to use a spinnerbait the same way. Throw it out and bump the cover on the way back in. His favorites are the War Eagle or Terminator brands in white, chartreuse or any combination of the two. His favorite fall sizes are 3/8- or ½-ounce baits.

"There is another thing I like to do with the spinnerbait this time of year," he said. "I'll reel it right to the cover, then just stop and let it fall. Sometimes I even flip it up by cover and let it fall with just enough tension left on the line so I can feel when they bite. Give that a try.

"The bass are beginning to chase shad to fatten up for the winter, and that's the key to finding them. Start in the backs of the big coves on the lake and look for activity on the surface. If the bass are active, you'll see shad flicking on the top of the water. Keep your eye on them and follow that activity. You have to move with the shad — because that's what the bass are doing."

There is one more trick he uses for early fall bass.

"You can't beat a Senko rig at Claiborne this month," he said. "Rig it up Texas or Wacky style. Toss it out by the cover and they'll come out and nail it. My favorite colors are watermelon red and green pumpkin. You can't cover as much ground as with the cranks, but you can catch some big bass. "

Claiborne has several good launching areas, including a modern full-service state park. There are also several good marinas, and the town of Homer is just minutes away for all your fishing needs. ■

- Kinny Haddox

**Lake Catherine** up next >

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## Keep your eye out for wigeon grass and birds

When action is jam-packed at the Trestles in Lake Pontchartrain, head over to Lake Catherine for specks.

Speckled trout anglers hammer the eastern Lake Pontchartrain train trestle every year, and when it's on, the fishing can be lights out. However, when too much boat pressure gets on the bridge, the fish will turn off faster than they started.

A great alternative this time of year is Lake Catherine, according to Matrix Shad owner Chas Champagne.

"I like Lake Catherine a lot," he said. "It doesn't get a lot of boats, and there's a lot of area to fish. It's all relatively the same: There's hot zones and cold zones, but if the fish are in there, you usually can catch them from one end to the other."

One very important element to find, Champagne said, is wigeon grass.

"That's been the key for like the past five years," he said. "If I'm 50 yards from the bank and I throw toward the bank,

every time I pop the cork, I can feel the lure grabbing the grass — that's a little too much. If I throw out toward the middle, I'm catching that grass like every fifth cast and that's where I catch the fish."

When fishing in Catherine, Champagne said if you can find birds diving, you've hit the jackpot.

"Catherine is notorious for birds diving, so if it happens, that's when it really lights up and we have some phenomenal days," he said. "That doesn't happen every year, but as far as speckled trout and bird fishing, Catherine is one of the better areas in our estuary."

When he's not seeing birds, Champagne simply works Matrix Mullet topwater baits to find the fish.

"The topwater works really good to locate the fish. You can bomb cast it a country mile. It's always good to tag team — one person with a cork and one with a topwater."

When fishing popping corks, Champagne uses the Matrix Float with a surprisingly heavy 5/16-ounce GoldenEye jighead 2 feet underneath, but his reasoning is sound.

"I've always liked a little bit more weight than some people," he said. "It'll help you cast it a little bit further, and when you're using a paddletail swimbait, you want it to actually swim back down after you're done popping it. You want to have some gravity pulling the lure back down after you pop it and let the tail flutter.

"If you pop it with an 1/8-ounce, you don't get any fallback." ▪

- Joel Masson

**Shell Beach** up next >

Capt. Jacques 'Jakamo' Laboureur said live shrimp under a cork is the ticket for specks, but artificials will still work, too.

# SHELL BEACH IN THE FALL

## Cool temps, less fuel some of the perks

October means less fuel, less heat and better fishing, according to Shell Beach area guide Capt. Jacques 'Jakamo' Laboureur (504-303-1494).

"The summer dragged on so long last year we had a late trout transition, and I see the same happening this year," he said. "What that means is some good-sized trout will still be outside in Bay Eloi at structures and the Rocks, but they'll also be swarming closer into the fringe bays like Lake Robin, Lake Campo, Lake Coquille and Lake Calabasse. This is a good month to hit all the big bays on the edges of Black Bay.

"But don't ignore the Biloxi Marsh either, because there should be some very good action in the bigger bays on the eastern edges out there as well. Christmas Camp Lake, Lawson Bay, Lake Eugene — all that area should produce specks, and maybe some decent-sized white trout."

Laboureur said he likes to drift the oyster reefs until he finds some action, and then set the Power-Poles down and see if you can put numbers in the boat. When the action dies, he resumes drifting and repeats the process.

Otherwise he likes to fish the mouths of bayous and passes where there is good water flow in and out of the marsh. The bait-fish and shrimp flow through those areas with the current, and both trout and redfish wait in ambush.

"The beauty of the fall is the reds and specks are hunting together," he said. "You'll catch them both in the same areas, oftentimes in the very same spots using the same baits."

For bait, Laboureur said live shrimp under a cork is the ticket to success, but you'll also do some good with soft plastics. Matrix baits in the lemonhead or pink champagne colors are good choices, fished under a cork, tight-lined or in tandem.

"The birds weren't active over the shrimp early this summer, but maybe they will be in the fall, and if you see them diving you should try fishing under them," he said. "The trout schools are generally bigger in the fall." ▪

- Rusty Tardo

# DELACROIX TROUT CAN BE TRICKY TO TRACK THIS MONTH

## 'Confusion state' rules for specks, guide says

October can be a tricky month for fishing. It's certainly a whole lot easier than September, but locating fish still can be a challenge.

Delacroix guide Capt. Casey Brunning finds speckled trout not yet fully inside, but more so in the fringe bays this month.

"They're in that confusion state of, 'I want to be inside, but I'm not sure I want to be inside,' so it's more the south end of Four

If you're targeting big fish, Capt. Casey Brunning recommends throwing topwaters this month out of Delacroix.

Horse, south end of Lake Robin, Round Lake — areas like that."

When he gets in these locations, Brunning always keeps his eyes peeled for prey.

"There's a good bit of bait," he said. "That's a lot of what the fish will follow in is the shrimp coming inside. You can find the shrimp coming out the water in certain places where the tide's running right and hit a gold mine."

Upon arrival to the fringe lakes and bays, Brunning likes to focus his efforts around points.

"We'll start off on points either that I know have shells below them, or that the tide's creating some sort of tide line around the point creating a turbulence for bait to get hung up in," he said.

The size of the speckled trout, Brunning said, can be really impressive this month.

"You can catch really big fish in October on the outside — the bigger bays closer to the outside waters," he said. "What I've found is when you're in school trout in October, you have to move a little further south.

"If you're on the north side of Lake Robin and you're catching one keeper for every 25 trout, you need to get to the south side of Robin."

When targeting strictly big fish, Brunning throws nothing but topwater baits. He likes the Matrix Mullet and Rapala Skitter Walk. If he's looking for numbers of fish, he throws both live shrimp and Matrix Shad under a popping cork. ▪

- Joel Masson

**Calcasieu River** up next >

Doug and Annabelle Guins hold the winning bass from a Wednesday afternoon dogfight this summer on the Calcasieu River. Many more bass like these will likely be caught in October.

# CHILLIN' ON THE CALCASIEU

## Use topwaters for consistent bass action

Southwest Louisiana's bass anglers were on Cloud Nine a few weeks ago because the Calcasieu River was in the best shape it has ever been going into September.

That, coupled with a heckuva summer of good bass fishing, gave them plenty of confidence that, barring a major weather event, the river would be in its prime the rest of that month. And with cooler weather on the way, hopefully that string will continue through October. No one knows this better than Ron Castille of Lake Charles, an all-around outdoorsman who has provided fishing reports for this magazine for many years. As Wednesday afternoon dogfights director the past 31 years for the weekly mini-bass tournament circuit on the Calcasieu, Castille just saw a remarkable summer of action at the scales.

How good was the bass fishing on those Wednesday evenings?

The average winning weight for the 20 weeks was 10.09 pounds — a 2-pound average — and there were several 7-pound-plus bass, including an 8-pound hawg.

Castille and others who love to fish the river system expect the fishing success to carry over into October.

One of the most consistent ways to put quality and quantity bass into the boat will be with topwaters early and late in the day, Castille said.

His favorite? Black Chug Bugs are irresistible most of the time when targeting the outgoing cuts. Those cuts usually have cypress trees or tupelo gum trees nearby, he said, so work the topwater back from the cut in a walk-the-dog pattern to the cypress trees or tupelo gum trees, then let it sit still for a second or two. If there isn't a strike then, continue walking the dog. The same technique can be used successfully with your favorite floating hollow-body plastic frog.

Another surefire pattern is to use a dark-colored soft plastic craw worm under a 3/16-ounce worm weight early in the day (later in the day switch to watermelon/red), he said. Fish the cuts with the plastic craw worm after using the Chug Bug. Also target the bigger trees near the first dropoff while moving on to the next cut.

So where are the cuts that bass anglers love to target along the Calcasieu River?

Most of the productive cuts are located in Moss Bluff Bay, Old Town Bay, Dan's Bay and Watermelon Bay, as well as several outside bends of the main river north of White Oak Park.

Castille reminded anglers that the Saltwater Barrier, built in an effort to keep saltwater out of the Calcasieu River, can cause tidal charts that many people rely on to be incorrect north of the barrier. ▪

- Don Shoopman

**Toledo Bend** up next >

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# TOLEDO BEND COOL DOWN

## Bass should begin to move back shallow from deep water

Bass anglers who frequent Toledo Bend can't wait for hoodie weather in this part of the state.

That means it'll be cool enough to put on a hooded sweatshirt and, most importantly, lower water temperatures and get the bass on the move from the depths toward shallower water, from the upper-end to the lower-end of the lake.

It'll be a tell-tale time, as well, for us to determine if there just might be something slightly awry with the bass fishery on this great lake shared by Louisiana and Texas.

With the exception of fair to good bassin' between sundown and sunrise, this has been a blistering hot, trying summer as far as putting bass in the boat. Let's just say it's been more than tough for three months.

It's still brutal, still tough — even the deep fish. I'm ready for a change. So are many other folks, including many fishing guides who have basically ceased going out on the water.

Thankfully, October should be a game-changer. Fall, according to the calendar, officially started on the third week of September. Hopefully, around then we'll start seeing cool fronts go all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. That's what we need to see a significant cooling of air and water temperatures.

What will happen then? When the water temperature gets out of the lower-90s and upper-80s, baitfish like shad respond and move shallower, as do the bass.

John Dean caught this nice bass while 'dropping' a soft plastic in the grass this summer.

Bass go into 12- to 15-foot depths when they first move from deep water where they've been cooling their fins. Then they eventually go into 2- to 5-foot depths.

Prime fall fishing should be when the water temperature gets into the mid- to upper-70s, just like during the spring. The bass should pig out, and pig out often. It should be a time for numbers and there's always the opportunity for a fat girl, a double-digit bass in October. I believe we'll see a big increase in 10-pound-plus bass in October.

If the bite doesn't turn on then, there may be some kind of problem. Those who have been grumbling about bass success, or the lack of it, have been asking questions the past few months — wondering what's wrong with Toledo Bend.

For sure, the food is here in the lake. There are millions of shad — huge balls of them.

The pool level has been pretty much average for late-summer and early fall elevation.

I'm optimistic the coming cooler weather will make a big difference in angling success. Traditionally, bass move up and bite — and I'm all for tradition. It should be a fun time. We may see some schooling action. I sure hope so.

Look for vegetation, which at the moment is at a premium after such a promising start earlier this year. Definitely, there isn't as much grass in the lake overall as there was at this time in 2017. However, lily pads are plentiful, so those who enjoy fishing lily pads should have a field day.

Topwaters probably will catch more bass than anything else in October. Chug Bugs, Spooks, buzzbaits — you name it, throw your favorite topwater. Plastic frogs will trigger plenty of bites, too.

Moving baits will be the order of the day once there is a cool down. Half-ounce shad- or bream-colored Rat-L-Traps, ½- or 3/8-ounce golden bream, green pumpkin or black/blue ChatterBaits, shad- or bream-colored jerkbaits and june bug Fluke-type soft plastics and Senkos all should do well.

The bass fishing should be awesome through October, November and hopefully December. My fingers and toes are crossed.

If you want to catch bass in October, I've been guiding on this lake most of my life and you're more than welcome in my boat. Give me a call at (936) 404-2688. ▪

- John Dean

**Venice** up next >

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# OLD MAN RIVER HOLDS ALL THE CARDS IN VENICE

With the Mississippi expected to rise at the end of September, Capt. Brent Roy said he'll target reds in the bays on the edges of marsh out of Venice.

## Target clean water close to passes, guide says

This fall was setting up to be epic for anglers launching out of Venice. The Mississippi River had been nice and low for a couple of months, and its waters were that beautiful shade of green that signals crazy fishing action.

But that's all out the window now, as torrential rainfalls up north have driven the river sky high. Some forecasts predict it topping 10 feet in New Orleans before the end of September.

You'll be able to more easily plow the river than catch fish from its waters.

But that doesn't mean you can't catch fish out of the popular fishing port. They just won't be in the river itself.

"If it goes up 7 feet in New Orleans, (the river) will be muddy," Venice Charters' Capt. Brent Roy said. "The fish won't be in the river.

"The fish will start moving into the bays and out into the Gulf."

He said the rising water stopped the normal September transition that already was underway.

"The fish aren't going to get into the river until it gets green and salty," Roy said.

Even on a normal year, that doesn't usually happen for trout until November. But redfish should be pretty thick by this time.

Roy said this major rise could mean those reds never return to the river during 2018.

"If the river stays up, the fish might not come back in until next spring," the veteran guide said.

And he isn't really saddened by the situation.

"For us in Venice, when the river is (low and) slow, it scatters the redfish out so much," Roy explained.

Sure, initially anglers can sit in one spot and wail on the reds, but as more water cleans up those groups of fish will thin out and make it harder to catch limits.

A rising river, ironically, makes it easier to catch numbers — if you know how to adjust.

"If the river rises, it's going to initially push them back into the Gulf," Roy said. "I can remember two years ago having to catch them in the bays."

And that's what savvy anglers will do this month: Head to the bays on the edges of the marsh surrounding the river from Empire down to the crow's foot.

"The fish are still there," Roy said. "People think they disappear, but they are somewhere. You just have to find them."

Roy will run the outside bays and beaches looking for the cleanest water possible.

"You've absolutely got to find the clean water closest to the passes," he said.

It's hard to say where that will be, as it changes day to day.

"That's going to be determined by the wind," Roy said.

And this angler knows better than to run from the wind, as many anglers do.

"If you have a hard south wind for three or four days, those banks of the south side will clean up," Roy said. "The hard winds are going to blow off that less-dense freshwater."

Take Bay Adams in the Empire area, for instance. Several days of 25 mph winds will make the bay a perfect target.

"That whole east side will get green," Roy said.

Of course, you have to be offering the right bait, and Roy said the choice is easy: dead shrimp under corks.

"Dead bait is almost a necessity," he said. ■

- Andy Crawford

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Daniel Wilson poses with the 9-foot gator he shot Sept. 1, during Mississippi's alligator season. After a 40-minute fight with a Penn 6000 Series rod and reel, Wilson was able to dispatch the gator with a shot from his 20-gauge.

Photo courtesy of Daniel Wilson

By Patrick Bonin

# 9-FOOT GATOR LANDED — FROM A 'YAK!

## 40-MINUTE BATTLE IN MISSISSIPPI RESULTS IN ANGLER'S FIRST-EVER GATOR

In the inshore kayak community, the Hobie Pro Angler 14 is a beast in the marsh, perfect for pursuing specks, reds, bass and more — and stable as a rock if standing up and sight-fishing is your thing.

But Daniel Wilson's plans for his PA 14 early last month were likely a little more aggressive than even the most confident Hobie design engineer.

The 37-year-old D'Iberville, Mississippi native who now lives in Mobile, Alabama decided the stealthy paddlecraft would be a perfect platform to target alligators — and that's just what he did on Saturday, Sept. 1 during the Magnolia State's alligator season on Bayou Heron south of Pascagoula near the Alabama state line.

After an epic 40-minute battle via rod-and-reel that morning, Wilson finally finished off a 9-footer from the PA 14 that he estimated weighed about 225 pounds.

### CAN-DO ATTITUDE

"It was something I had never seen anybody do, and I wanted to be the first to my knowledge that's ever done it in a kayak," said Wilson, who described himself as an avid inshore kayak angler all the from Grand Isle to East Alabama. "Over the course of the last year, I had been seeing the animals in that area and it just struck me as an idea, like, 'You know, I can do this.'

"The kayak community has these stigmas about it, like you're limited on what you can do, and boaters say we get in their way and can't do what they do — I just wanted to be the one to say, 'Yes we can.'"

And he did.

But harvest rules in Mississippi make the task even more monumental from a kayak: You're not allowed to bait, so gators have to be stalked and hooked, and then noosed with a catch pole before being shot.

But Wilson drew two tags in the state's lottery harvest system, so that morning he and his fishing partner, Steve Roberts, kayaked down Bayou Heron to see what they might find.

"I just happened to catch a glimpse of him when he surfaced — it was really a lucky chance that I saw the animal," Wilson said.

But as they approached, a storm moved in and the duo had to push into the marsh grass to ride it out. Incredibly, the gator was still in the area, just beyond a point after the rains moved through.

### 40-MINUTE BATTLE, INCLUDING SNAPPED ROD

Wilson eventually got within about 60 feet of the gator, and then cast a weighted 10/0 treble hook from his 6000 Series Penn rod and reel. The alligator submerged and he missed with the first cast, but connected on the second.

"When I felt the hook come tight, I set it and the animal started to move. I thought I had jumped him but I didn't and set it again," he said. "Then the fight began, me and him back and forth. It lasted about 40 minutes.

"The last 20 minutes of the fight I had a broken rod — it snapped about 3 foot above the grip."

Wilson had hooked the animal near one of its rear legs, so Roberts assisted by getting a second hook in the gator so the noose could eventually be slipped over its head.

Finally, Wilson stood up in the Hobie and dispatched the gator with one shot from his 20-gauge shotgun.

### GETTING A 9-FOOTER INTO A 14-FOOT KAYAK

Then the real fun began: loading up a gator that size into a 13-foot, 8-inch 'yak.

"We had to figure out how to get him out," Wilson said with a laugh. "We had an idea, but the logistics of getting a 9-foot animal into a kayak posed a little more difficulty than most people would imagine."

Ultimately they succeeded, and Wilson brought the animal home to clean. He plans on having lots of gator jerky soon, and is getting a European skull mount commissioned to remember his first-ever gator from a 'yak.

And he was quick to credit his teammate for the overall success of the trip.

"Steve was a key part in this. It wouldn't have happened without him. He was an equal part in this process, and gets just as much credit as I do. He was there for the planning, the brainstorming, the preparations and the licensing, the hunt, the processing," Wilson said. "He was an equal part in this. My key role was I drew the tags and I made the shot."

If you have a kayak and are crazy enough to consider targeting gators, Wilson had some sage advice.

"Preparation and knowledge are key," he said. "Don't go into it blind. Know what the animal is going to do and respect the animal. Prepare yourself ….

"He wasn't a really big gator, but the first one out of a kayak, he was plenty." ▪

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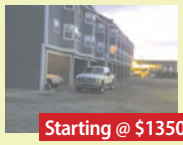

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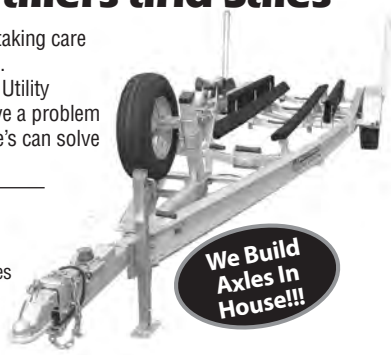


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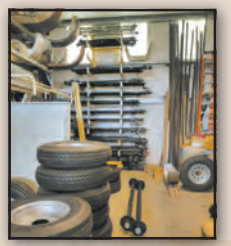

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## ADVERTISERS INDEX


ACE'S RETRIEVERS ..... 159
ALARIO BROTHERS ..... 106
ARCTIC ICE ..... 117
ASCENSION EQUIPMENT & RENT ALL ..... 4
ASCENSION GOLF CART ..... 52
BARATARIA TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM ..... 95
BAYOU OUTBOARDS, INC. ..... 109
BENT MARINE ..... 5
BEST BOAT & RV STORAGE II ..... 13
BLACKWELL AUTOMOTIVE, INC ..... 119
BLANCHARD TRAILER SALES ..... 149
BLANCHARD'S REFRIGERATION ..... 137
BLUE DOT MARINE ..... 141
BLUE WAVE BOATS ..... 7
BOAT STUF ..... 129
BOATS UNLIMITED ..... 72, 73, 75
BOSS DRIVES ..... 68
BREAUX AND DAIGLE MARINE ..... 21, 185, 195
BROOKHAVEN HONDA ..... 178, 179
BRYAN'S MARINE ..... 157
BUS SUPPLY COMPANY INC. ..... 56
CAJUN OUTBOARDS ..... 49
CAPTAIN PAUL TITUS ..... 159, 184
CAROLINA COMPOSITES, LLC ..... 101
CASE LAND CO, LLC ..... 126
CCA - LOUISIANA ..... 174, 175
COTTONMOUTH BOATS ..... 52
COVER'S UNLIMITED ..... 193
CUSTOM CORRUGATED AND SUPPLY ..... 17
CYPRESS COVE BOATING ..... 74, 92, 121, 173, 187
DAGATE'S MARINE ..... 113
DEEP SOUTH GOLF CARS ..... 183
DEER VIEW WINDOWS CO. ..... 57
DELTA WATERFOWL ..... 19
DIXIE RV ..... 162, 163
DONNY WILLIAMS ..... 35
DOWN EAST GUIDE SERVICE ..... 75, 137
DUVIC'S BOATS ..... 95, 114, 202
ELITE STOR ..... 109
FIRST SOUTH FARM CREDIT ..... 203
FRED NETTERVILLE LUMBER ..... 33
GATOR TAIL OUTBOARDS ..... 3
GATOR TRAX ..... 3
GIBSON REALTY/UNITED COUNTRY ..... 62
GO DEVIL ..... 63
GULF COAST AQUATRACTION ..... 104
H&H MARINE ..... 143
H&M MARINE ..... 92
HANCOCK FOREST MANAGEMENT ..... 125
HANKO'S ..... 122
HENDERSON ..... 48
HOUSEBOAT OUTLET ..... 193
HUGHES WELDING AND MFG ..... 136
HUNTERS FOR THE HUNGRY ..... 39
HYDRO TURF ..... 91
JERRY'S MARINE ..... 42, 43
LAKE AREA MARINE ..... 189
LEUPOLD & STEVENS, INC. ..... 64, 65
LOUISIANA LOTTERY ..... 15
M&L ENGINE, LLC ..... 105
MARINE LIFT AND DOCK SUPPLY COMPANY ..... 171
MCCLAIN LODGE ..... 37
MCM LUMBER ..... 191
METRO BOATING ..... 19
MIKE GERALD'S TRAILER ..... 185
MOLPUS TIMBERLANDS MONROE OFFICE ..... 61
MOSELEY & HOLLARD MEN'S CLOTHING ..... 33
MUD BUDDY ..... 9
NIKON SPORT OPTICS ..... 40, 41
OUTDOOR POWERHOUSE ..... 150, 151
PARISH TRACTOR ..... 51
PELLEGRIN MARINE ..... 158
PERFORMANCE OUTBOARDS SALES & SERVICE INC. ..... 184
P-LINE /G. PUCCI & SONS ..... 155
PRO DRIVE ..... 177
PUGLIA'S SPORTING GOODS ..... 77, 78, 79
QUIRK'S WELDING LLC ..... 126
R & H FIBERGLASS/MR. B'S BOATS ..... 187
R. SCHEXNAYDER & SONS ..... 61
REALTREE OUTDOOR PRODUCTS ..... 204
REDMOND MARINE ..... 170
REED'S METALS, INC. ..... 23
ROAD AND TRACK POWERSPORTS ..... 87
RONALD THE BOAT BROKER ..... 149, 183
SCOTTYS CAMPER SALES ..... 8
SCULLY'S ..... 112, 172
SEA TRAC OFFSHORE SERVICES ..... 25
SERVICE CHEVROLET ..... 11
SHIMANO ..... 130, 131
SLIDELL MARINE ..... 27, 96, 105
SNAP LOCK BLINDS ..... 83
SONNY FREEMAN ..... 28
SOUTHERN EXPOSURE INLAND FISHING CHARTERS ..... 191
SOUTHERN OUTDOOR TECHNOLOGIES, LLC ..... 55
SOUTHERN OUTDOORS AND MARINE ..... 103, 149
SOUTHERN POWER AND EQUIPMENT, LLC ..... 189
SPECIAL K HUNTING CLUB ..... 133
SPORTS CENTER ..... 57
SPOTS AND SPECKS ..... 114
STAR BRITE, INC ..... 47
STERLING'S UPHOLSTERY ..... 177
STIHL SOUTHWEST ..... 6, 64
SUZUKI CORPORATION OF AMERICAN ..... 173
TERRE NOIRE REFUGE ..... 137
TERREBONNE MARINE ..... 142
THE CRAPPIE PSYCHIC, LLC ..... 115
THE ISLAND ..... 123
THE SPORTSMAN ..... 114
TIM'S MARINE ..... 66, 67
TOHATSU AMERICAN CORPORATION ..... 160, 161
TOWN & COUNTRY MARINE ..... 85
TWIN LAKES WHITETAILS ..... 135
UNDERWATER FISH LIGHT LLC ..... 111
VENABLE FABRICATION ..... 135
WATSON'S WHITETAIL ..... 40
WHITETAIL PROPERTIES ..... 55
WILCO MARSH BUGGIES, INC. ..... 133
XPRESS BY ALUMA-WELD, INC. ..... 2
YO-ZURI ..... 97
Z-MAN FISHING PRODUCTS ..... 171



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